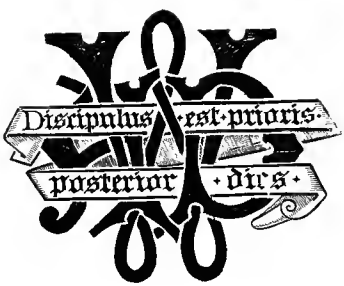
THE DAYS OF JEANNE D'ARC

MARY HARTWELL CATHERWOOD

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THE DAYS OF JEANNE D'ARC



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JEANNE D'ARC

FROM THE STATUE BY PAUL DUBOIS

THE DAYS OF JEANNE D'ARC

BY

MARY HARTWELL CATHERWOOD

AUTHOR OF "THE ROMANCE OF DOLLARD"
"THE WHITE ISLANDER," ETC.



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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

TO A MUCH-LOVED FRENCH-AMERICAN WOMAN

MRS. CHARLES HENROTIN

PREFACE



HIS book is the outcome of many months' patient study and collection of material in America; the revisal and rejection of much of this in Paris; of journeys over the Maid's country and her path from Domremy to Rouen, in voitures, on foot, in carts; of a careful study of the fifteenth century; and, at the risk of moving a smile, I will confess it is the result of a divine hint.

Too much stress cannot be laid on geographical correctness in the setting of any historical story.

More than two thousand books have been written about Jeanne d'Arc, many being mere repetitions of previous books. The list of these works makes a formidable volume. She is almost the only human being who grows more admirable and wonderful the nearer you come to the truth about her. Occasionally you will hear a reader exclaim, like the courtiers at Bourges, "Jeanne d'Arc!—I am sick of her!" But the majority of the world go on from generation to generation imitating the troops of France, who form in front of the stone shed where she was born and present arms to her before they pass by.

THE DAYS OF JEANNE D'ARC

THE DAYS OF JEANNE D'ARC

I

ALL France was lighted by an early rising moon, and the village of Bury-la-Côte, seated on a high ridge, seemed to glitter just beneath the sky. There was frost on the square, low church tower, on tight-shut windows, and on the manure-heaps carefully raked into place beside the doors, and held by stone barriers to mellow for the spring fields.

It was a cold night even for January. Durand Laxart decided, as he unchained his horse, to let the cart stand outside the archway, and lead the poor beast directly into its snug stable in the end of the house.

He came out again into the moonlight and walked around the muck-barrier to his own door. He was proud of his new house. It had an ogival portal, and above the little window was an ornament in stone shaped like a clover-leaf. But no light shone through

this window, for a long, dark passage led to the inner room, where his wife and new-born child lay asleep in their cupboard bed. Durand took off his wooden shoes, and carrying them in his hand, tiptoed over the hard, white earthen floor. The woman's brown peasant face, strangely bleached and refined by motherhood, awed him by its contrast with the coarse wool of her bed. The bed doors stood wide open, their clean panels shining in the firelight. A whole bundle of fagots blazed in the chimney. The white stone mantel, shaped somewhat like a penthouse, and the scoured hearth flags, brightened the dark room, for there was only one window, looking toward the valley of the Meuse.

He scented his supper in an iron pot on a tripod before the fire. The table stood near the hearth, holding a large knife with which to cut his bread, a wooden drinking-cup, and a flask of red wine; for in this valley of the Meuse contending armies had not trampled down the vines.

The woman and the baby continued to sleep. Durand slipped on his wooden shoes again, and opened a back door into his garden. There was a steep flight of stone steps, down which he thumped toward a tile-roofed oven. The garden sloped downward, and though it had the desolation of winter upon it, his eye selected the very spot where he would soon begin to dig and plant. Pausing, with his wooden shoes wide apart on the slippery descent, he gazed down the south-stretching valley, the loveliest valley of the Vosges, streaked with ribbons of stubble left by the scanty crops. Plowing and sowing had been irregular

work since the English began to trouble France. The soil had a whiteness not given to it by winter rime; but in the next villages, hid from him by a shoulder of the hill,—Goussaincourt and Greux and Domremy,—there were black gaps made by raiding Burgundians. The Meuse, in summer almost hid among its marshy islands, now spread from bank to bank, showing a line of ice along its edges. The course of the Meuse was called the march of Lorraine and Champagne, and had long been a place of contention between kings of France and dukes of Burgundy, lying as it did between the two portions of Burgundy. The people of this march had no feudal lord between them and the king; they were vassals to the King of France alone. This bred a serious and stubborn loyalty, which kept them bound to their sovereign, though isolated from him. For in that year of grace 1429 the kingdom of France had receded before the invading English until its northern line lay far below the ancient capital of Paris, and included only the provinces of Dauphiné, Languedoc, Bourbonnais, l'Auvergne, Berri, Poitou, Saintange, Touraine, and Orléans. And some of these were crumbling before the incoming tide. All the richest provinces and nearly all the seaports were held by the English. To go into France from the march of Lorraine at that day meant to traverse a wide country overrun by aliens.

The far ridge beyond the Meuse seemed to draw near in moonlight. All at once there was a sweet clamor of bells drifting from Greux and Domremy, and the church of Bury-la-Côte joined in, chiming the angelus. The man pulled at his cap with a gesture of

reverence, and slouched into an attitude of devotion. He felt constrained to pray, for at the sound of the bells his wife's cousin, Jeanne d'Arc, came out of the oven-shed with a huge ring of bread in her hands. She slipped the ring upon her arm and joined her palms, bending her forehead to them. While the angelus rang no man could speak a word to little Jehannette. Though she was full of life, Durand sometimes thought her unnaturally religious for so young a creature. But it made her very handy when one had sickness in the house. He was better pleased to have her take care of his wife than to have his own loud-voiced mother continually about.

As the bells ceased, a faint wailing in the house called them. Jeanne put her ring of bread on the table, and took up the baby, while the mother, roused from sleep, answered her husband with yawning responses:

"It is nothing but drowsiness that keeps me abed. I shall be up at my spinning by to-morrow."

"Not to-morrow, Aveline. Isabel Romée says we may keep Jehannette two weeks more. Let her spin for thee. She can spin and sew as well as any maid of her age in the Meuse valley."

"But if I am able to spin, why should n't I? A man never thinks any woman can get tired of waiting on him. Jehannette may like to stir from the house while she stays." Aveline drew her hand down his winter-reddened cheek.

"Lie still yet to-night," he insisted; so she dozed again, while he cut his black bread and emptied the pot into his platter. Then he sat down comfortably to

his supper. The earthen floor, as hard as rock, had been brushed speckless with a broom of soft river-grasses. Small joists, crossed by large beams overhead, so low that they almost touched his hair when he stood up, were rich brown in the firelight. There was no candle lighted. Threads of flame wove themselves among the fagot sticks and rushed up the chimney-back. Jeanne sat with the child's swaddled feet toward the blaze, and after blinking at the joists it sunk into the stupid content of its kind. Her face was so young that this maternal care was like the attitude of a child nursing its painted doll.

Durand poured out his wine, and plunged his fingers into his dish. He glanced at the girl, but her eyes were on the fire, and suddenly he noticed under them the hollows made by weeping. Her face was oval in shape, and the outline of the cheek never changed, but firelight showed the pallor of dejection. The laced bodice of her red peasant dress did not cover the top of her neck; it was white and childlike compared with the neck of her cousin in the bed. Her hair was twisted into a long knot, but it flew out in halos. The hollow between lower lip and chin was deeply indented, and her chin was pointed rather than round.

"What ails thee, Jehannette?" inquired Durand, with quick sympathy and some dread that she had grown tired of waiting on him.

Jeanne visibly repressed herself. Instead of answering she inquired of him:

"Did you see my father in Domremy to-day?"

"I saw him; he is well."

"And my mother?"

"Yes; she is well."

"And Pierrelo?"

"Yes; he sent a kiss for each cheek."

"Mengette and Jacquemine, you also saw them?"

"I saw them all, and they all asked when you were coming home; but Isabel hath promised you to us a little longer. It is not so far from Domremy to Bury-la-Côte," argued Durand; "not two leagues, though they be slow leagues through stiff clay across the prairie. Your foot-path along the hills is quicker."

"But it is farther to Vaucouleurs," said Jeanne; "I must go to Vaucouleurs to-morrow."

"And what would you do at Vaucouleurs?" Durand's eye twinkled. "Would you go to take back what you said at Toul?"

Jeanne's hazel eyes reflected his image with simple candor.

"No; I will never take back what I said at Toul."

"But Bertrand de Poulengy is a fine young fellow. I have heard if we knew more about him it would turn out he was born in a château."

"He should have learned to speak the truth there. He did a wicked thing to take a public oath I had given him my word. I had to go to Toul to deny it before the magistrate. It was very cruel of Bertrand de Poulengy."

"He wanted thee," chuckled Durand. Nothing amuses a man so much as another man's discomfiture in courtship. "And thy father and mother, they were willing."

"But I cannot cumber myself with marriage," said

Jeanne. Her repressed weeping broke out. "Compère[1] Durand, I must go into France."

The man paused in his eating, holding the meat between his jaws. He had heard of this matter before; but it had not pierced his marrow with that sweetness of voice and that cry of necessity. "I must go into France!" Jeanne's voice was spoken about in the valley. When she called to one at a distance, the bell notes expanded, filling the air; but in talk she spoke low. The woman in the cupboard bed was aware only of the man's hoarser note.

"Jehannette, thy father has told me he would drown thee with his own hands rather than have thee go away with men-at-arms."

Jeanne put out one palm to stop him. The firelight showed her long fingers and compact wrist. Tears rushed down her face.

"My father—my dear father! I would rather be in the fields with him, or by my mother's side spinning, than anywhere in France. But I can no longer help it. For three years I have been commanded, and now I must go."

"Who commanded thee?" asked her relative, holding a black bit of liver in his fingers.

"Attend," said Jeanne, in the manner of the peasants of Domremy. Her childish face stiffened with awe. "I was about thirteen when I had a voice from God to help me rule myself. The first time I heard it I was very much afraid. It was in my father's garden at noon in the summer. I had fasted the day before. The voice came from the right hand of the church,

[1] Godfather, friend, or crony.

and there was a great light with it. Afterward, if I was in a wood I heard the voice coming to me. When I had heard it three times I knew it was the voice of an angel. It has always kept me well, and I understand perfectly what it says."

"What does it say?" whispered the man. He obeyed habit, and put the bite into his mouth, but held it there with the other meat. Old Choux in Domremy, Jeanne's nearest neighbor, who was so old that people had forgotten his age, was claiming to have a voice also.

"It says,"—she lifted both hands and threw them out before her,—"'Daughter of God, go, go! I will be thine aid.'"

The baby slept in its bands on her lap. The fagots showed that her face was white. Durand ground his food and swallowed it with a gulp; he leaned his elbows on the table.

"Pucelle,[1] did you see anything in the light?"

Jeanne's voice became a thread of sound, one chord, on which she vibrated to him:

"I saw St. Michael; I saw St. Catherine and St. Margaret."

"But how did you know it was St. Michael, or St. Catherine and St. Margaret?"

"At first I did not know, but St. Michael told me; he said: 'Go into France; St. Catherine and St. Margaret will aid thee.' I said on my knees: 'How can I go? I know nothing of arms.' He answered: 'Daughter of God, go, go! I will be thine aid.'"

Though Durand Laxart had never seen visions, and

[1] Maid.

his wife Aveline had never seen visions or heard voices, he felt a surging of the blood which seemed to clear his brain for new impressions. Jeanne saw that he believed in her. The strained whiteness of her face became a softer pallor, and she wiped her eyes.

"Compère, have you not always heard that a woman would ruin France, and a maid from the march of Lorraine would rise up and save it?"

Durand nodded his head. He had heard this prophecy all his life, and it had already become a common saying that Isabel of Bavaria, the queen, was that woman.

"The Queen of France is that woman," said Jeanne; "she has denied her own son, and sold us all to the English. Compère, myself—I am that maid from the march of Lorraine. I was born for this purpose. You must take me to Vaucouleurs, to Robert de Baudricourt, and ask him to send me into France. I have to raise the siege of Orléans and take the Dauphin Charles to be crowned at Rheims."

Durand sat staring at her without speaking. He poured out a cupful of the thin, sour wine, and drank it down.

She had to raise the siege of Orléans, and take the Dauphin Charles to be crowned at Rheims!

It was high time the dauphin was crowned at Rheims, that ancient city of coronation, where nearly every king of France since Clovis had been consecrated. No subject accepted a king until he had been crowned at Rheims. The loyal people of Poitiers had put a crown upon Charles's head, but his enemies laughed at him, and called him the little King of

Bourges. And it was high time some power raised the siege of Orléans—Orléans, the heart of France, the key to the southern provinces, the last stronghold of the loyal party.

News traveled slowly, but in those days political facts were stamped on a peasant's mind by the horse-hoofs of raiders. The Duke of Orléans was a prisoner in England. His people, in their extremity, had appealed to his enemy and kinsman, the Duke of Burgundy, to stand betwixt them and the English, and make their territory neutral. The Duke of Burgundy attempted to do this, but his distrustful allies permitted him to protect no French territory except his own. It was hard to be the greatest peer of France, the one whose right it was to place the king's crown on his head and do him first homage, and yet to be constrained by personal revenge to join hands with hereditary foes and invaders. The Duke of Burgundy was now sulking in his own domains, and the English intrenchments were closing around Orléans.

"Compère," continued Jeanne, "when I found my family would never consent, I started by myself one day to go into France; but when I had gone some leagues I knew it was no use. I must be sent by the Captain of Vaucouleurs; St. Catherine and St. Margaret have told me what to do."

"Do you ever see their faces?" inquired Durand, sinking his voice.

"I see their faces," spoke Jeanne; "I see them always in the same form. I do not know if there is anything in the shape of arms or other members figured. They are crowned with beautiful crowns,

very rich and very precious. Of their raiment I cannot speak. I know them by the sound of their voices. They are sweet and humble. They speak very well and in beautiful language, and I understand them perfectly."

It was an age in which supernatural things were heard of on every side: but Durand had a well-compacted body, and lived near the soil; he had never troubled himself about spiritual mysteries. This new attitude of his mind, when he noticed it, astonished him. He did not know why he believed in Jeanne; he felt as if he were in church, and obliged to do what he was told to do. The baby slept on her lap, with the rapid breathing of infancy. He looked at his little child with an emotional puckering of his face, and at the larger child holding it. His wife had played with Jeanne d'Arc about the spring behind Bermont chapel. His wife was now a young matron; but this other girl, of unusual physical growth, had yet an innocence like that of a babe. St. Michael, the terrible archangel of battles; St. Catherine, the martyr of Egypt; and St. Margaret, the Greek virgin, might have shown themselves to such a being.

"But if I take thee to Messire de Baudricourt, Jehannette," Durand objected, "what will Jacques d'Arc and Isabel Romée say to me?"

"They will forgive you."

"They will say I have made them a poor return for the nursing of my wife and child," he continued.

"If you cannot take me, compère, I must set out by myself on foot to-morrow," she responded.

"No; that will never do. I must go along."

Durand sat frowning over his folded arms while he deliberated. He glanced toward the cupboard bed, and leaned forward to speak between nearly closed lips.

"Attend, Jehannette. When my mother comes in to-morrow to help Aveline with the child, we will say nothing about Vaucouleurs. They might send word to Jacques and Isabel. I will say I go again to Domremy. When you get into the cart they will think you are going home."

Jeanne heard this proposed deceit without any answering smile of caution.

"I must go, no matter who tries to prevent me. They will forgive you, compère, and they will forgive me when they understand that I was obliged to go."

"The horse and the cart and I, we will have to stay in Vaucouleurs overnight. Attend, Jehannette," continued Durand, twitching the lid of one of his pleasant eyes. "I will say that I may have to go even as far as Neufchâteau to-morrow. It is a bad time of the year to travel, and I cannot get back the same night."

As he laid plans to hoodwink his family, Durand's big finger traced a map on the table, with the villages in their actual position, leaving out the intermediate ones which had nothing to do with the matter: Vaucouleurs first, in the north; then Bury-la-Côte; Domremy farther down the valley of the Meuse; and farthest south of all, Neufchâteau. The cunning expression on the honest man's face made Jeanne laugh. The tears were scarcely dry on her cheeks, but her whole figure was elastic with relief.

"We must tell the truth, compère; I think Aveline

and your mother ought to know that we go to Vaucouleurs."

Durand regarded her attentively, and nodded his head. "Eh, well; if you think it best, I will tell Aveline and my mother. But the next thing to be considered is, where will you stay at night in Vaucouleurs?"

"I have thought about the wife of Henri Royer the wheelwright," answered Jeanne. "She was my mother's friend when they were both pucelles in Vauthon."

"Her house will be the place for you. Have you ever seen her?"

"Only once, when she came to Domremy in a new cart, before men-at-arms overran the country. It was before our Catherine died. Aveline and I were not old enough to tend the sheep. She gave us all a good welcome to her house."

"It will do," said Durand, with satisfaction; "and now go to bed, Jehannette, for we must get up early to make this journey."

Drawing the child's clumsy cradle to its place beside the cupboard bed, Jeanne tucked the little bundle in, and put away the remains of Durand's supper on the shelves of a closet beside the chimney. She then washed the ware which he had used, and set the cup back on the clean table beside the unfinished bottle.

To reach her bed she was obliged to go out of the back door into the garden and enter another room. She went without any light except the abundant splendor of the moon. It was to a fireless best chamber, as chill as the walls of a tomb; but her face laughed

in the closing doorway as she bade her kinsman and helper good night.

"Good night, Jehannette," answered Durand, and he poured out another cup of the thin wine, and leaned over the dying fagots. "Oh, yes; I will tell Aveline and my mother," he said to himself, rubbing his knee, and grinning; "but I will tell them what I please, and it will not be that I go in the direction of Vaucouleurs. A man ought to have at least one lie on his conscience when he goes to confession. I have recently been too good myself."

It was not the lie which troubled him most all next day.

VAUCOULEURS,—valley of colors,—built on a hillside above the Meuse, was a walled town, one of the faithful little citadels holding out for the Dauphin Charles. The river-meadows below are wide, and clouds seem always to be leaning on those Vosges hills, which roll in undulating uplands against the sky. The early blue twilight of winter had already begun to blur leafless thickets on the islands and those ribbons and squares of stubble which showed where the valley crops had been and the plowman had not, when Durand Laxart drove his horse between the southern gate-towers. Flakes of stiffened mud fell from the cart-wheels on the small paving-stones of the principal street; dirty water stood chilled in the stone gutters. Vaucouleurs, like other towns, threw its worst out of the front door, and saved its best for the garden at the back. Crooked and winding streets, so narrow that a cart filled them from wall to wall, ascended and

descended in every direction. The château of the Captain of Vaucouleurs was up the height, and its battlements and square towers could be seen far down the valley. Jeanne had watched it while horse and cart plodded over stretches of the white mire into which those stony hills dissolved their dust. She still looked upward, half muffling her face in her woolen wrappings, as Durand stopped in an open square and searched for Royer's house.

"They told us at the gate that it faced north—a high, narrow house with a yellow door. There it is," said he, indicating a door with his whip. He turned the horse's head.

"But I must go first to Messire Robert de Baudricourt," said Jeanne.

"Not without a bite to eat or a fagot to warm by?"

"I am too warm, compère; I am full of blood. And I cannot eat until Messire de Baudricourt has heard what I have to tell him."

"Eh, well," grumbled Durand; "but consider the horse. I say nothing; fasting is good for my soul: but the poor beast has no soul to be benefited, and he needs stable and provender."

"Then, compère, let me stand here while you stable the horse and take a message to Henri Royer's wife. I cannot speak to any one before I have spoken to Messire de Baudricourt."

Durand would have descended from the cart, but Jeanne let herself lightly down by the iron step. Then he rattled across the square, and she stood waiting.

Some children in wooden shoes made a great noise in the street as they ran past with a dog. They looked

at her, but felt too abashed to say good day to a stranger who did not appear to see them. Few women looked out of the closed windows. Candles began to show.

ROBERT DE BAUDRICOURT, the Captain of Vaucouleurs, was sitting at his supper when a soldier came in and made salutation. Enjoyment of his fire and cheerful table never relaxed this portly captain of an isolated and dangerous post. The Burgundians were more to be dreaded than the English in his part of the kingdom, but matters were growing so bad that everything was to be dreaded.

"News, my man?" he inquired, with an alert turn of the head.

"There are two peasants at the gate, messire the captain. The woman says she has an urgent message for you."

"Troopers are probably out over the valley again. Bring her in and let us hear what she has to say."

He went on hastily with his supper, for arming and saddling might be the very next business. At the sound of wooden shoes he looked up, and saw a bareheaded peasant, abashed and reluctant, leading into the room a young maid in a bodice and petticoat of the coarse cloth spun and woven in the valley. Her bodice was laced up toward her neck. Baudricourt noticed that her face was white even to the lips. He expected to hear of a house sacked and a family slaughtered.

"Good evening to both," said the captain; "I hope you bring no evil news."

"No, messire the captain," spoke Jeanne; "I bring

you good news. St. Michael and St. Catherine and St. Margaret have sent me to you."

Baudricourt wheeled around in his chair. In all his military experience he had never had any dealings with saints. It was his opinion that the beneficent powers, if any existed, had washed their hands of France. There was not a more distressed kingdom on the face of the earth. The very princes of the blood had trampled it in their quarrels. For years a lunatic king and a dissolute queen had represented its government. And now that Charles VI was dead, his heir the dauphin was disinherited by the treaty of Troyes, which bound the queen and the Duke of Burgundy to the party of young Henry of England. Paris was the capital of invaders. The whole realm was desolated by long-continued war. And now Orléans was about to fall into the hands of the enemy.

"Who are you?" inquired Baudricourt, bending his eyebrows at Jeanne. Robert de Baudricourt never seemed a clean-shaven man; he bristled fresh from his toilet.

"I am the maid sent from God."

"What 's your name?"

"Jeanne d'Arc; but in my country they call me Jehannette."

"What do you want?"

"I want you, messire, to send me to the Dauphin Charles. I have to raise the siege of Orléans, and take him to be crowned at Rheims."

"Stuff and nonsense!" roared Baudricourt. "Why do you come to me with such a tale as this? You fellow with her, who are you?"

"I am her cousin, messire the captain."

"Her relative, are you? Has she no father and mother?"

"Yes, messire the captain."

"Then take her home to them, and tell them to give her a good whipping. St. Michael and St. Catherine and St. Margaret!" repeated Baudricourt, cutting his bread with a blow. "Go home and spin and mind your sheep, and don't come to me with your archangels and saints and coronations! Tell her father and mother to give her a good whipping!"

II

THE winter air of the courtyard did not cool Durand's burning chagrin at having taken a step which brought a young pucelle to such treatment. The peasants of the Meuse valley had never learned to cringe to a feudal lord, but Robert de Baudricourt represented the king among them. Durand took Jeanne by the elbow to lead her away. Her father's resentment, which had followed him all day, now approached and hung over him. Domremy and Vaucouleurs were almost the extreme boundaries of his world. He was angry; yet nothing kills faith in the unseen like ridicule.

Durand could see the quaking of Jeanne's figure, and hear the indrawing of her breath, as she wept in her wrappings. Twilight lingered here when darkness lay in the lap of the valley. The soldier who had led them into the château could also see her going with bowed head from Baudricourt's abuse. He looked after her with a puzzled smile, but Durand's compassion was like a woman's.

"Come home to Royer's house, pucelle; they are ready to give thee good treatment there. I blame

myself for this. Such a thing shall never happen to thee again."

While he talked at her side, Jeanne turned to the chapel which stood facing Baudricourt's quarters. Durand followed her, his shoes clumping on the flags. He was afraid Baudricourt would send some curt envoy after the maid and hale her out, and was glad that the open door showed little except a dusky interior. But when Jeanne saw there was no light, she turned and followed some steps which led down into a crypt. Durand felt along the wall as he clumsily kept on her track, and descended to a corridor which ended beside an arched door. The crypt chapel had floor and vaulted ceiling of white stone, and he could distinguish small carved faces set like rosettes around the supporting pillars. Walls swam in dimness, but there was a cup of crimson light on the altar between the statues. Jeanne was kneeling before it. That was always her way. Aveline had told him that Jeanne used to leave her playmates dancing by Bermont spring, or listening to some delicious tale like "The Red Children,"—as red as melted iron,—and slip up to Bermont chapel to pray. "And what was there in Bermont chapel?" said Aveline. "Nothing but a painted wooden image of the Virgin and Child, the Child holding a bird in his hand."

Durand stood by the door and waited until his charge was ready to rise up and come away. As for himself, he felt more like swearing than praying.

They were both silent as they went down hill; but when they reached the square before Royer's house he suggested:

"We must get up early in the morning to start to Bury-la-Côte."

"Yes, you go back, compère; Aveline expects you; but I have to stay here until Robert de Baudricourt sends me into France."

"He will never do it, Jehannette."

"Yes, he will do it; I must go to him until he does do it."

"You shall not stay here among strangers, to be railed at by the Captain of Vaucouleurs; that I will not myself allow."

"Compère, I have to go into France. Robert de Baudricourt will be obliged to send me. St. Catherine and St. Margaret have told me that."

"Jehannette, come home; I do not know how to face Jacques and Isabel."

"You must let me be, compère; I cannot turn back."

Merely walking in her company seemed to infect him again with her visions; every step took him farther from Baudricourt's contempt.

"Royer's wife has a good welcome ready for you; but Jacques d'Arc shall never say I brought his maid here and left her to shift for herself. I am obliged to go home, but I will come back again in a week."

"Tell my father," said Jeanne, quickly, "it will be no use to follow me."

"I shall keep myself out of the way of Jacques d'Arc till this business is settled."

"But if Aveline sends him word he will surely follow me."

"I do not think she will send him word, Jehannette.

My opinion is," added Durand, under his breath, "she has no word to send."

In a week Durand Laxart came back to Vaucouleurs, and found Jeanne spinning by the side of Royer's wife. The shadows were heavier under her eyes, and the oval of her face had grown more wan.

"She is the best pucelle I ever saw," declared her guardian to Durand, after taking him into another room and setting food before him. "All day she is either spinning with me or on her knees in the chapel."

"Has she been to messire the captain again?"

"My faith, yes! And I never thought to stand by and hear such railing as he put upon her. But to-day he came down here with the priest and a censer, and they exorcised her for an evil spirit. Par examp'!" cried Royer's wife; "did you ever hear of such a thing as exorcising a child like that for an evil spirit!"

"She is no more under possession than is my baptized infant," said Durand, with strong disapproval.

"And that messire the curé saw when he bade her approach. She fell on her knees, and went so across the stone floor, and she laughed in their faces, the dear child, at their foolishness."

"Have you heard whether messire the captain will send her into France?"

"He says he will not, and he will have her punished if she comes up to the château to trouble him again. But my husband has told me a messenger went out several days ago to the dauphin at Chinon, giving information about her, and asking what shall be done with her."

Durand felt his heart sink, for in every Christian realm the fate of accused sorcerers was the stake.

He did not talk much with Jeanne, but sat and looked at her silently. The week had changed her. She noticed her surroundings less. She was waiting with all her body and spirit. Durand felt hurt that she did not inquire about the baby; all the children in Domremy and Bury-la-Côte used to hang about her petticoat, she took such pleasure in them.

Next morning he walked the streets of Vaucouleurs instead of going to chat in Royer's shop. Vaucouleurs was his great capital. He never expected to see anything finer. The gray-tiled roofs were more venerable to him here than the same kind of roofs in Bury-la-Côte. There was a white glare from the white soil which smote on the eyes even when the sun did not shine out. Beyond the western wall he could see the Meuse in its meadows, and then the long ridge beyond, bearing up sear vineyards which in a month would begin to quicken with vines.

On the terrace of street where Durand clumped aimlessly along some public theme fermented. The air had a mild and springlike touch, and people came out of their houses. He saw through an open window half a dozen or more maids sitting close together with their little wheels, and caught the names St. Catherine and St. Margaret.

He saw two women with children in their arms meet on a corner, and nod white caps, as one of them pointed toward Royer's house.

The street was choked with huge wagons woven of unpeeled boughs into the shape of enormous baskets,

oblong and rounded, heaped with charred sticks. Three horses with bells on their high yokes were hitched in a line before each load. The charcoal-burners were bringing in the product of their labor, thankful to be within closed gates, safe from wanton despoiling. They marched bareheaded beside their horses, cracking their whips, each with a black smock over his woolens descending almost to his wooden shoes. The first man encountered a group in mid-street that the touch of a horse's nose did not scatter. He shouted warning, but the foremost horse was willing to halt, and yoke after yoke ceased swaying and filling the narrow track with melody. The drivers all came up open-mouthed when they had rested a few minutes; for the talk was about raising the siege of Orléans, and taking the dauphin to be crowned at Rheims, and a maid who wanted to be sent into France.

"She says she must go," declared a mercer, who had his shears hanging to his neck by a cord. He also was smocked for his labor behind the counter. "I never heard anything so strange as a young pucelle wanting to leave her family to go where there is so much bloodshed."

"There will be more bloodshed, and one will not have to go far to see it," said a man who carried a quill behind his ear, and wore instead of the blouse or smock a short, close garment called a hardy-coat, buttoned its entire length in front. "If the dauphin could get soldiers from Scotland, what port is there open to land them in?" He moved his large, light eyes from face to face.

"What pucelle wants to leave her family and go into France?" inquired one of the charcoal-burners.

"It is a young pucelle from Domremy," answered a baker, pushing his white cap awry with the back of his hand. "The women in Vaucouleurs say there is nothing to be spoken against her. She pays no attention to anything but her prayers and her spinning. She wants Messire de Baudricourt to send her to the dauphin."

"Is there not an old saying," asked the charcoal-burner, "that a maid from the march of Lorraine is to save France?"

The men all turned as if surprised by an echo. The old saying had been many times repeated that week in Vaucouleurs. The man in the hardy-coat took the quill from behind his ear, and poised it as if about to write his words on the faces of the others. He was a distinguished person: he could both read and write. Writing legal papers was his business; and though among nobles his calling was despised, it gave him some authority in a remote place like Vaucouleurs. "I believe she is the maid. It will be as little as the town of Vaucouleurs can do to fit her out for the journey."

"En nom Dé!" exclaimed a smith, "if the saints send her into France, let her go! Here is the fist that will shoe her horse free of charge."

"It is Messire de Baudricourt who will decide that," said the mercer; "but I have good gray Flemish cloth on my shelves."

"There she goes to the chapel crypt again to pray," said the baker. Dough stuck to the nail of his point-

ing finger. "They let her in at the fortress gate for that. She goes three times every day."

They all stood silent, watching Jeanne ascend a flight of stone stairs to the winding track by which the château was reached. Her shrinking, muffled figure had already taken on for them a kind of religious sanctity.

As she turned the wall she came face to face with a middle-aged knight. He wore no armor except a heart-shaped cuirass or breastplate buckled with leather straps over the front of his close-fitting habit; a sword hung from his belt. Jeanne held her woolen covering by one hand under her chin; not a bit of her hair showed. The face, with its clear eyebrows and delicate, round-lipped mouth, was so sweet and determined that if he had not taken up its cause before he must have been moved to do so now.

"Pardon, pucelle," said the knight. He put his hand on his cap. "I am Jean de Metz, seignior of Novelopont, one of Captain de Baudricourt's officers. I know why you are here, and I would willingly help you."

"Messire, everybody in Vaucouleurs knows why I am here. I am waiting for Robert de Baudricourt to send me into France. I must reach the dauphin before Easter, if I wear off my legs to my knees."

Her low voice stirred De Metz like a call to arms. He stood looking at her with his cap off. His hair, betwixt black and gray in color, was cut straight around below his ears, and being of a strong growth, flared outward. The dazzling light of the uplands printed benevolent wrinkles about his eyes. His chin

stood forward even when he lowered it toward his breast, and it gave force to his smile and words.

"Pucelle, I will, on my own venture, take you to the dauphin. Messire the captain will not forbid that."

"Messire de Metz, I thank you for your good will; but I must be sent from the governor of my own country. Bitterly have I learned that. My counsel have bid me to wait."

"And who are your counsel?"

"St. Michael and St. Catherine and St. Margaret."

"Do you hear their actual voices, pucelle?"

"Yes, many, many times. But it is when the church bells ring that they speak to me clearest."

"But how can you hear voices through a clamor of bells?"

The reticence of one whose dearest secret is touched appeared in Jeanne's face. Her eyes pitied him for not understanding.

"The voices are clearest then," she repeated. "They often come among Christians who do not hear or see them."

De Metz had never served in the dissolute rabble of Southern soldiers and mercenaries. He thought it was his own softness which melted before her. Yet he realized all the enormous force carried by a person with one idea.

"When you go to the dauphin," he offered, "I will be your knight, and commander of your party."

"Messire knight, you have given me comfort; but I have no comfort to send to Robert de Baudricourt. Tell him that my counsel have told me this day the French have suffered a defeat near Orléans, and it

might have been prevented. And worse will come unless I am allowed to do what I am sent to do."

She made him a peasant's reverence, and went on up the hill; and he went down, resting his left hand on his sword-hilt, and staring at the stony soil. The walls made a sheltered reservoir in which air settled warm from the sun.

De Metz passed the staircase which Jeanne had ascended, and winding on, he came to a narrow turn between houses. A young man whom the knight did not know stepped before him there. The young man pulled off his cap. If he had not been well dressed in a close hardy-coat belted around his hips, and the same kind of long cloth trunk-hose and leather shoes as De Metz himself wore, the knight might have taken him for a bold footpad. Yet at second glance he had a handsome young face. He was well made and he was blue-eyed, an unusual thing in rugged Lorraine.

"Messire, I want to speak a word with you," said the young man.

"Speak," responded De Metz. He was at first not inclined to stop, but he did stop.

"Messire, I know you to be the knight of Novelopont. I am a free-born man. My father has a holding of land in Neufchâteau. Before my time we were better than innkeepers. My name is Bertrand de Poulengy. You were talking yonder with a young pucelle."

De Metz glanced backward as if the shadows of Jeanne and himself were still standing by the wall.

"Do you know her?" he inquired. "I thought she was from Domremy village, not Neufchâteau."

"She is from Domremy village, messire. I am going to tell you the truth. I was a fool. When the raiders came two years ago, and the people were driven from Domremy to Neufchâteau, her family lodged with us. You may not know it, messire the knight, but there is no one like her in the world. She helped my mother when we were thronged, and she was so humble and so kind that even before they went home again I began to think I should die if I could not get her. But we were both young, and my father obliged me to wait awhile before he made the proposals. Messire, her family were willing, but she would not marry at all." He hung down his head.

"Never mind, my lad; never mind. There are plenty of maids for wives in the world. This one has set her heart on other things."

"That is not it, messire. I was like a crazy man. Some said she was so timid and modest that if I took oath she had given me her promise she would not dare deny it, and everything would go well after we were once married. I thought about it day and night. Then I went to her mother, and her mother was so terrified by the pucelle's talk about going into France that we both thought such a sin might be forgiven. So I went to Toul and took oath before a magistrate."

"My faith, you were a persistent man," said De Metz, with contempt.

"Yes, you will find me that," answered Bertrand, lifting his head. "Messire, she went to Toul herself, and on her oath denied it. It was a hard thing for a young pucelle to do. I put that mortification upon her. There is no excuse for me. I was a fool to think

I could get her. Messire, I want to be her squire or servant if she is sent to Chinon to the dauphin."

"Do you think a man who has perjured himself is a fit man to be squire and servant to a good maid?"

The boy's appealing eyes took all the sternness out of De Metz's question.

"Messire, if you had ever been—that way, you would not judge me at my worst."

"But if you were in her party you might grow worse—that way," suggested the knight.

"I can never think again, messire, that if she would take a husband she would ever look at me. But even my father and mother understand I have to go to the wars. You are older than I am, messire, and perhaps you have wife and children?"

"No, I have none," said Jean de Metz.

"I have taken another oath," said Bertrand, "and this oath is a true one. I will follow her if she goes to the wars, and take all the care of her that a man may. She is more than wife and children and friends and home to me. Messire, she is religion to me now."

Though De Metz's experience extended little further than Bertrand's, he dimly recognized the cry of that age in the boy's declaration. It was the exalting of a virgin, chivalry and religion strangely met. Political divisions had resulted from it. Dominican friars, who opposed the dogma of the immaculate conception, had been expelled from the court of the late king; while Franciscans, who zealously upheld the dogma, became identified with the loyal party. The Duke of Burgundy protected the Dominicans, and they turned with him to the English cause.

"I will do this much, my lad," said De Metz; "I will recommend you to messire the captain. But a man makes his own reputation in arms. Have you a horse?"

"Yes; I came here on a horse of my own. My father gave me enough to fit me out. There is no other child at home."

"That is hard for your father and mother."

"But they were willing to let me go."

"Did you hear of the maid so far down the valley?"

"No; I did not know she was here until I came to Vaucouleurs. But her family have been afraid for two years that she would go into France."

THE news was spreading, however, as far down the valley as Domremy. Durand Laxart's wife got down from a cart, and took her child from the hands of the neighbor who had given her the lift. Her uncle, Jacques d'Arc, came from the fagot-stack to meet her. He had gentle, dark eyes and a face of lovable keenness. The winter day was so mild that he had been at work bareheaded, and his yellow-ivory skin showed hundreds of little cross-lines enmeshing his small mouth, which was like his daughter's, with a sweet and wistful expression. This look changed to apprehension as he carried Aveline's baby in.

The house was a shed-shaped stone cottage with the roof sloping from a height on one side half-way to the ground on the other. At one corner of the low side Jeanne's little window looked directly at the church. Aveline noticed the church while she followed her uncle. The door was partly charred, and there were

patches in the roof. A new low tower replaced the high square tower which had been there before the Burgundians swept the valley.

Aveline's small forehead was drawn with puzzled anxiety, and it tightened as Jacques d'Arc inquired:

"But where is Jehannette?"

She hurried before him into the house, and looked about as if she must find the answer there. The earthen floor and the stone mantel were white. There was a wrought-iron plate to keep the back of the fireplace from crumbling with heat, and it glowed rosy behind the fagots. Isabel Romée's andirons, which were her pride and inheritance,—three feet high, with cups at the top for brewing posset, and hooks in front for bars,—held the fagots in place and some meat suspended from a bar roasting for dinner. The father had watched Jeanne's head rise year by year and overtop these andirons. He remembered more than one night when she had slept on the floor before the great guardians of the hearth, giving up the daughter's chamber to refugees made houseless by raiders. With the self-control of habit, he stooped and turned the meat before laying Aveline's precious bundle in her arms.

"Here is your child; now where is mine?"

"My uncle Jacques, is Jehannette not here at all?" persisted Aveline, turning her head like a hen.

"How could she be here and also in Bury-la-Côte? We lent her to you," accused Jacques.

"Did not my husband bring her home more than a week ago?"

"She has not been seen in this house since she went to nurse you."

Aveline began to cry.

"Then it is true that Durand Laxart went to Vaucouleurs the first time as well as the second time. I heard them talking about Vaucouleurs while I was asleep, but he told me he was going to Neufchâteau and would bring Jehannette home. She herself told me nothing. I thought she wanted to see her mother."

Jacques set his hands in his thin hair. His face bleached while she spoke, nostrils and jaw-lines showing for a moment as in a death's-head.

"My child has gone into France! Durand Laxart has taken my child to Vaucouleurs, and let her go into France!"

He flung the door open, and ran toward the Meuse, his wisp-like legs threatening to snap with the weight of his wooden shoes. Aveline, rolling in her short petticoat, ran after him, holding the baby, and making audible noises as her tears increased and her breath shortened.

The ice was gone from the edges of the Meuse, and a practised eye might note reviving life in the flat islands. Near the bridge was a deep pool, and two women had set their box-shaped washing-tables, open at one side, in the water's edge, and were kneeling at their labor. The sound of their paddles could be heard along the valley, as they beat and turned and dipped and beat again the coarse, dark woolens of their families. One was a large-framed woman; she wore a white cap on her auburn-and-gray head. The other was a girl, and though the winter sun shone directly in her face, she kneeled barehcaded. She had a countenance which seemed to shine with rapturous

contentment, and impressed the beholder as purely blonde. It was afterward a surprise to see that her hair was black and her skin really dark, and that it was only a whiteness of expression.

"How do you get along, Mengette?" inquired the woman.

"It is nearly clean now. I wish I could put Choux in the river and wash him."

"He grows fouler as he grows older," remarked the woman. "This water, is it not cold for thee?"

"No colder for me than for you, godmother Romée," answered the girl. A woman kept her own name in marriage, and the wife of Jacques d'Arc was always called Isabel Romée of Vauthon.

"But I am hardy. I can cleanse woolens at the river when most other women keep the house. I would rather spread garments on the bushes when snow flies than have them lying foul."

They heard a cart rolling over the bridge, and looked up. It was a stranger's head passing along the parapet. Cart-wheels were not so startling as the sudden clatter of horsemen. Every villager lived ready to seize his goods and drive his flocks for safety up in the hills.

"That was Jehannette's way also," said Mengette; "we have had many a good time bleaching clothes together at the river. Her cousin keeps her too long, godmother. Why don't you command her home again?"

"We foolishly promised Durand; but I am going to-morrow to see her myself."

"Are you going in the cart?"

"No; the lads must get more fagots in while this weather holds good. I am going by the hill path."

"Then let me go with you, godmother. I can set Choux's dinner for him on the table, and we can reach home by twilight."

"It will be very good to have you," said Isabel, and their paddles brought echoes from the hills opposite.

"I will tell Aveline that when her little maid grows up she will find how hard it is to lend her and doubly lend her out of the house. Jehannette must come home with us; it will not do any longer."

She heard a noise in the alluvial hollow, and turned, to face Aveline and Jacques and the calamity.

Isabel struggled to her feet.

"Where is Jehannette?" she demanded.

"I am going to Vaucouleurs," answered Jacques.

Isabel flew at her husband, and caught his wrists, falling on her knees. She begged him not to tell her that her child was gone. Her bare red arms and hands, and her face burned by many a day in the fields, lost their strength in a moment, and hung on the slighter man. Jacques held her against him as she kneeled, hushing her cries, and straightening her cap, while he formed his lips piteously for an ungiven kiss.

"I am going to Vaucouleurs," he repeated; "I am going to saddle the horse. Pierre and Jacquemine will stay here with thee."

"Oh, Aveline, it is not true that my child has gone into France! You have not let her poison our old age and kill us! We lent her to you in a time of need. Give me back my Jehannette!"

Aveline, suffering for her husband's act, hid her face from Isabel, and mourned aloud. Mengette helped Isabel to stand up, and supported her on one side. That serene look which had made Mengette Jeanne's favorite did not pass from her face with the dripping of tears. The quick and helpful little creature put her nervous strength to the mother's sagging body, and when the wretched procession was in the house Mengette returned to finish the clothes and carry them away to spread. The blow was heavy upon her. Mengette had not much in the world which she could afford to lose. She was a stepchild of fortune, but she had always cheated the sour dame by her own temperament, and got the best out of everything.

Jeanne had slept with her in her own bed, and she looked back now at their simple talks about life and religion and angels. Neither girl knew that maids usually talked more about men than about angels. It made Mengette very comfortable to be with Jeanne. But lately she knew her friend had gone beyond her. She could not herself understand how any maid could feel impelled toward war; and as to being spoken to by saints, Mengette prayed that such a thing might never happen to her. She could take care of the house and her geese, and sew and spin, and tend Choux as long as it pleased Heaven to let him last; but if a saint had spoken to her out of the clouds she must have died of fright.

Jacques d'Arc was on his horse galloping to Vaucouleurs, and Isabel lay prostrate in the cupboard bed, with Aveline to wait on her. The lonely little worker kept to her double task at the river. At noon it was

growing colder, and her heart was heavy. The pleasure of washing in the villages was in the meeting of many women, and chattering and laughter and news-telling between the thump, thump of the clothes-beater.

When everything was wrung out she piled the large pannier up until it towered over her head, then she lifted it to her back, thrusting her arms into the plaited handles. Mengette was obliged to steady herself carefully to keep from tipping backward. As she turned her face to the ascent she saw Jeanne's two brothers coming over the bridge with a cart-load of fagots. Oxen drew the cart, moving almost silently between parapets where it was impossible to run aside or rebel against the head-yoke. The labors which belonged to other seasons were done then as men had opportunity to do them. Sowing and reaping, tying up vines, burning charcoal, and bringing in fuel, had not the old regularity. Though the valley of the Meuse was remote from the track of the invaders, it was the direct route between the two portions of Burgundy. And there were armed bands gathering in all parts of the kingdom, mercenaries who had shaken off military service and really taken to the trade of robbers. Some of them yet wore the badge of the Armagnacs, as the dauphin's party was called, and others wore the badge of the English. These wolves of war penetrated everywhere. What Domremy had suffered from the Burgundians was never forgotten.

Pierre walked ahead of Jacquemine, cracking the whip. It was always Pierre and Jacquemine, never Jacquemine and Pierre, though Jacquemine was the eldest of the family. Jean, the second brother, was

already married and settled in his mother's house at Vauthon. He seemed no longer to be of the family, for his wife's people had absorbed him; Pierre and Jacquemine were the sons at home. Pierre was a large fellow with rich, dark, rosy color, and gray eyes that laughed inside their black lashes. He held his head back, and his cap usually slipped to one side upon it. The girls in Domremy liked him, but he was fonder of his sister than of any of them. He was two years older than Jeanne, and Jacquemine was four years older than he was. Yet he could lift Jacquemine up by the girdle and smock; and though Mengette had little to complain of in the world, it disturbed her to have Pierre do this. The helpless, wrathful look on Jacquemine's face as he struck and kicked against the indignity aroused her. Jacquemine had always come to her to talk about his troubles, which consisted of slights put upon him. There seemed to be too little of his darkly freckled, sandy, and wizened person. He wept as easily as a girl, and this wrung Mengette's heart and first attracted her protection. A betrothal had been arranged between them by the two families before her father and mother died, but it was understood that they were not to marry while Choux lived. They would not have enough to support a family with Choux also to provide for, though by themselves they might be fairly prosperous. Jacquemine's father was to give him a field and some cattle. Mengette had a house and garden and a flock of geese. She herded the geese herself, and exchanged their feathers for wool; and being a thrifty maid, gathered her own fagots,—for Choux would not work,—and weeded and

tied vines in vineyards whenever the chance offered. Besides, Mengette had the caps and petticoats her mother wore, waiting in a chest until she should need them. She had carried them with her when the villagers fled to Neufchâteau from the Burgundians.

Jacquemine sulked across the bridge without seeing her until Pierre called down a good day. She made a sign for them to halt, and ascended with her load, dreading to speak her news, yet obliged to spare Isabel. The oxen swayed to one side, the foremost one running obstinately down the bank. Pierre had some trouble to bring them to a stand beside a wall without upsetting the load. Jacquemine waited at the end of the bridge until Mengette struggled up to him. He did not reach down his hand to her as Pierre would have done: for Pierre was always quick to notice when a pannier was heavy, and to help a maid, especially his sister and Mengette; but Jacquemine seldom noticed anything except his own feelings. He was the kind of man that women wait on; masculine strength was not expected in him.

Jacquemine was stung because she rested the bottom of the pannier on the parapet and waited until Pierre came back. If Mengette had anything to say, he was the person to say it to. This individual resentment entered his grief when he heard the news.

"I always knew Jehannette would disgrace the family," he exclaimed, coloring darkly; "if you do not want to marry me after this, Mengette, I shall say nothing."

"She has not disgraced the family," retorted Mengette, with heat. "She is better than I am. You

ought to be ashamed of saying she has disgraced the family."

Jacquemine's eyes filled with tears. "You can take her part against me if you want to." And he turned his back and sobbed. Mengette herself wept again, understanding and pardoning his misery. But Pierre stood without a sound. He did not hear them, or Mengette knew he would have shaken Jacquemine over the parapet. Rings of dark hair had been formed about his forehead by the heat of walking. He held the whip across his shoulder, and stood stunned, taking the news into his mind. The long stretch of road and meadow and hill rising toward Neufchâteau was behind him. The January sky was soft and gray with gathering clouds. One could hear the wind begin to sing up in the leafless oak woods where Jeanne used to run about with him.

He spoke out huskily:

"Does anybody know that she has yet gone into France?"

"No; but it is certain she has gone as far as Vaucouleurs. Aveline says Durand Laxart is in Vaucouleurs now; and she heard them talking about it. Your father is already on the road," repeated Mengette.

"I am going with my sister," determined Pierre.

The habit of his life was first to assert itself. From the time Jeanne was old enough to run in the fields, Pierre had run after her and let her dictate the course.

"Your father told your mother that Jacquemine and you would stay with her."

"Jacquemine can stay, but I am going with my sister."

"Go, go!" said Jacquemine, showing an indignant face over his shoulder in the act of wiping it with his sleeve. "By the time all the family have run off but me, my father and mother will find who is really a child to them."

"But, Pierre," pleaded Mengette, "godmother Romée is struck down in her bed. If you go now it may be the death of her. She said to Aveline, 'You have let my child poison our old age and kill us.'"

"Go, Pierre!" repeated Jacquemine, fiercely; "I can do all the heavy labor, and take care of the family and the cattle in case the Burgundians come again. Run after the Armagnacs, you and Jehannette."

"We will," responded Pierre.

"But wait, Pierrelo, until your father comes back,' still pleaded Mengette; "he may find her and bring her home."

"He will not find her; he should have sent me."

"Yes; he should have sent big Pierre," venomously hissed Jacquemine.

He snatched the whip, and ran clattering on to start the oxen. They were not used to his guidance, and swayed in a zigzag course from wall to wall, while he cracked the whip and let his trouble out in noisy abuse of them. Mengette lifted her pannier and trudged directly after him. She was a pucelle of spirit, but Jacquemine's rages always woke her motherly compassion, like the helpless suffering of a child. She felt it necessary to quiet him before he went into the house and increased the disapproval which he had long resented there.

Pierre sat down on the parapet of the bridge and

stared at the washing-place, where open-sided box-tables and paddles yet remained. The Meuse curled about its islands and rippled among the naked bushes. He was not sure that it was a calamity which had fallen on the family, but it was certainly a grief. To be entirely separated from his sister was out of nature and not to be endured. He had a vague and careless knowledge of Jeanne's visions and of what she intended to do if she went into France. Pierre was not spiritual-minded. He had almost to be flogged to his prayers when he was younger. He enjoyed the world; but more than everything else he enjoyed loving. Jeanne would draw him after her as certainly as the bell-sheep drew the flock. But when he had thought awhile he decided not to set out on foot along the hills to Vaucouleurs without seeing his mother, as he would be obliged to do if he went at once. He would not forsake his mother while she lay prostrated by the loss of Jeanne. But he had a conviction that his father would never bring Jeanne back.

And when Jacques d'Arc reached Vaucouleurs he did not find his daughter. He was the last man to enter the gates that night, haggard and splashed with hard riding; but a strange experience met him there. He had scarcely mentioned the maid he was seeking when a lantern was lifted by a passer-by, and men came together in a bunch like bees to hum about her. She was as well known in Vaucouleurs as the captain there. They escorted him like a guard of honor to Royer's house.

"Here is the father of the maid," they said to Royer's wife, when they had struck on the door and she opened

it. "We have told him that she has gone to Nancy with her cousin and the knight of Novelopont, being sent for by the sick Duke of Lorraine."

Jacques leaned his head on his hands and listened to Royer's wife when he was in the house. It was plain that the people in this part of the country believed Jeanne ought to go into France.

"But she shall come home," said Jacques, feeling the tightness at his heart relax, since she was gone in the opposite direction, and he might yet intercept her. "She is my little maid. As to raising sieges and crowning the dauphin, we have a hearth for her in Domremy, and she was always contented there until these troubles grew so bad. Her mother is struck down in bed on account of her. If the saints sent her into France, I will say the saints have little regard for family ties. We have no other maid: our Catherine is dead. From the time Jehannette could clip her little hand around one of my fingers, she would toddle at one of my legs and Pierrelo at the other. I say she shall not go; and she was always obedient. What! would I let my innocent child go among men-at-arms, and be spoken to by any vile follower of the camp? I would kill her before she should suffer such things."

He waited several days in Vaucouleurs, wrenched from his accustomed places, and divided between Jeanne and Isabel. The journey was an education to a peasant who had never stirred before, except from his native village to Domremy, and afterward to Neufchâteau. He felt the pulse of the world, and realized the growth of his child. But he was more than ever determined not to give her up; and when the strain

of his absence grew unendurable, he saddled his horse in haste, and said to Royer's wife:

"I am going back to Isabel, and Pierre will come in my place. Tell Jehannette I command her home with her brother. Tell her that I forbid her to go into France. The curse of the disobedient will fall on her if she goes. My maid is a good maid, and I blame the people of Vaucouleurs for encouraging her in this strange desire. Her innocent dreams about angels and saints, what would they avail her among bloody men-at-arms? Her place is at home with her mother and me."

But before Pierre reached Vaucouleurs the dauphin's messenger from Chinon had galloped in, and Jeanne had gone.

Jacques's horse fell lame. He led it and walked, stumping among the stones in his sabots, and reaching Bury-la-Côte late in the night. There he slept in the house of Aveline's mother, and borrowed another horse. But the delay made Pierre too late.

It was a poor, powerless maid who threw herself across a bench and cried aloud on her knees when she returned from Nancy, and was told that her father had been seeking her, and the messenger from Chinon was already there.

"Oh, my father, my dear father! How can I endure not to see my father and mother and Pierrelo again! But I must go—I must go!"

Jeanne ran from the house up the stone stairs leading to the chapel crypt. It was her last heartbreak before the altar, weeping to be sent, and weeping because she must be sent.

There was excitement both in the château and the town. Nobody in Vaucouleurs except Baudricourt had doubted that the dauphin would send for the maid. Candles burned all night in the shop where her outfit was finished, and the people of Vaucouleurs, who bore the expense of it, looked in crowds at the busy workmen as a public spectacle.

"The maid is to ride forth in man's apparel," said women to one another, in consternation. "She says she has been counseled so to do. Is that decent?"

"I call it decent myself," decided a dame in authority. "What would she do with petticoats astride of a horse, riding a hundred and fifty leagues, and having no woman of her party? Even messire the captain had nothing to say against it when she begged for the habit of a man."

"Messire de Baudricourt has changed his opinion of her since the dauphin's messenger came in with news of the defeat near Orléans."

"Yes; they say the maid knew it, and sent him word the very day the battle was fought."

In Vaucouleurs Jeanne was the maid who out of the march of Lorraine was to deliver France. She was to have a knight and a squire, two common soldiers as their servants, an archer, and the dauphin's messenger, as her escort. Durand Laxart himself pledged payment for a horse. It would be a hard ride to Chinon —from this northeast corner of the ancient realm a hundred and fifty leagues diagonally southwestward across France. The party would have to avoid cities held by the English, and slip between marauding bands. They had five large rivers to cross. Wherever they

dared use the old Roman roads good speed could be made; but much of the journey lay across trackless spaces full of the dangers of war.

It was the first Sunday in Lent, and people flocked to the château early in the morning to see her start. The maid had been brought there by Royer's wife and other women, to be dressed for her undertaking.

Every citizen of Vaucouleurs raised his cap in the air and cheered as she came out into the court, a supple, easily moving creature with a radiant face, in the suit of a man-at-arms, the jacket and tunic of gray cloth, the cuirass of leather thongs. Her long hose, cut and shaped from the cloth, were laced over her body-garment, and strong leather shoes were on her feet. The women had cut her hair off about her ears, and put the cap of a man-at-arms on her head.

The horses were standing ready. The men of her party waited her mounting. There was nothing male about her. Though she looked smaller than in her maid's dress, no person said to another, "She is like a boy." She was simply the maid dressed to ride like a man.

"What have you there, pucelle?" inquired Baudricourt, meeting her, and taking her packet to fasten behind the saddle.

"My red peasant dress, messire the captain."

"What would you do with your peasant dress on a journey to court?"

"Unfold it and look at it sometimes, messire. I love what I wore in my home."

"Let come what may come of this," said Baudricourt, "Heaven knows I don't understand these things,

or how you should be able to tell me there was a battle over some herrings and camp supplies near Orléans the very day it was fought. But go your ways, pucelle my friend; it is no longer my affair."

"Good-by, messire the captain; have no fear for me. I shall be taken care of."

"If you be not, God he knoweth it will be through no fault of mine; for every man in this party hath sworn an oath to me to deliver you safely to the dauphin."

Jeanne laughed as she put her hand on the bridle. Her squire knelt to take her foot and lift her into the saddle.

"I am a peasant," she said; "I do not know anything about mounting as grand dames mount. Let me find a block of stone." Then she looked at the squire with sudden scrutiny.

"Not this man, messire the captain. Has this man also taken oath?"

"I have," the young man answered, on his knees; "and this oath is a true one, maid of France."

Jeanne believed him. She had no grudge against Bertrand de Poulengy. Her open, bright look accepted at once his atonement and their new relations. She mounted the horse from the château steps. Her eyes moved gratefully from face to face in the crowd. She lifted her cap; her forehead was white in the sun, a girl's smooth forehead, with the hair blowing back from it. Men and women felt their hearts swell. This tender young being was going out to fight for them. It was the strangest thing that had ever happened. For a hundred years France had given her

sons to war, but now a daughter was demanded—a maid was necessary for sacrifice. Jeanne leaned down and grasped hand after hand. Women kissed her fingers, which had not yet touched anything more deadly than needle or spindle. She was their dear child, whom they were themselves giving up.

"Good-by," said Jeanne, looking into her cousin Durand's faithful face; "I am glad you christened the baby Catherine. Give my love to them all—my father, my mother, my Pierrelo—"

She touched the spurs to her horse, and the party rode out through the gate, which is called to this day the Gate of France.

III



HOUGH Jacquemine gave Mengette trouble, the burden of her life was Choux. Since the death of her father, Auguste Poulinet, and her mother, Marguerite Vallas, she had lived in her house with this relative, whose exact kinship could hardly be traced, yet who was handed down as a charge. Choux was a humpbacked creature, so old that age had given him up and delivered him again to the lithe activities of youth. He seemed made of steel springs. His joints and muscles did not sag when he walked. The skin was so tightly stretched across the bones of his large features that it scarcely wrinkled, but, deepening its brown, became like mummy husk, with points of fire surviving in the lively eyes. What few shreds of hair he had clung in forgotten strands to the skull; but these were seldom seen, for Choux wore always a red woolen cap tied under the chin like a woman's. This was as much a part of him as the red sash girdling his clothes around the middle. He wore it indoors and out, to mass and to bed. When Mengette saw that the cap would have to be renewed, she made another, and standing behind

the bench while he ate, put it over the one he wore. Choux let the strings hang down unheeded until he was alone. Whatever became of the first cap, whether he secretly burned it or buried it in the earth, it was never seen again. One pair of clean strings soon appeared under his chin, and Mengette drew a breath of relief.

But it was not so easy to get his garments from his body. Choux's instinct was that an animal's covering ought to shed naturally. He exhaled a hyena-like odor, and when on a February day he sat by the chimney, Mengette was thankful for its wide throat. Domremy was not too sensitive to smells. Chickens and geese lived in the streets, and manure-heaps ripened beside the front doors. But public comfort sometimes demanded that Choux should change his clothes; and the curé, Father Fronte, was then obliged to labor with him. In his heart Choux despised the offices of the church, but he stood in terror of having its final protection denied him. When exhortations and threats had availed, Mengette flew to the river with his cast-off things. She had once anchored them and let them freeze, and as often as she could afford it she gave him an entire new outfit.

Choux had nothing except a high regard for himself, and he had not labored in her lifetime. He often sat bragging by the hour in the Widow Davide's wine-shop. The Widow Davide, when a customer grew noisy, would take him by the ear and lead him to the door, and it was his part to grin and submit. Choux, for more reasons than his tongue, was oftener led out than any other man; yet he never suffered it without indignation and astonishment.

He danced before the wine-shop to show his contempt for the Widow Davide, and made a tube of his fists, trumpeting through it. His hump, as he tilted and turned, gave him the high-shouldered appearance of a hyena. He sang derisively about the wine she sold. It was not fit for dogs—dogs would die of it, in fact. He could marry the Widow Davide if he wished, but who would marry a woman that sold such bad wine?

"Myself," proclaimed Choux, slapping his breast, "I was brought up on the best. Nothing is too good for me. When I was of an age to marry, all the maids of my village wanted me for a husband. I picked the handsomest and richest, and when I was married my wife did nothing but wait on me. She sold the last goose of her flock to provide me for travel. I have seen the world in my lifetime. I have been eastward as far as Nancy, and westward as far as Bar-le-Duc; and if my wife had lived to work for me I might have gone farther."

"He never was married in his life," the listeners told one another, laughing. "The Champenois are great boasters," was one of the proverbs of Lorraine. Choux came out of Champagne.

He trumpeted through his hands, and danced again, making a clatter on the hard road with his wooden shoes. "I can whip any man in the wine-shop. And this will be the case with me until I am ten years older. Come out, Widow Davide, and take me again by the ear. Have a care; it will not be the Burgundians who next time set fire to your house; the people of Domremy are fond of me. I do not lift a hand for

myself. Everything is done for me. I am the flower of the Meuse valley."

Through all his dancing and boasting the uncanny creature carried the natural grace and airiness of the Latin. An Anglo-Saxon boor, half tipsy before a wine-shop, would have broken the door or the head of its keeper. Choux's many words were to him what action is to the more forceful race. As he capered in the green winter twilight Mengette appeared at his elbow, to drive him to shelter as she had already driven her geese. He knew she had plenty of fagots in, and the soup steaming before the fire. He enjoyed the life he lived, and the homely night sound of dogs barking in Greux.

"Regard me now, Widow Davide. My supper is ready, with meat in the pot. Why do I ever come to your wine-shop to be poisoned? It is because I pity you. I am not above showing sympathy to a poor woman without a man."

"Go home, Choux," said Mengette, pushing him. "The Widow Davide may declare your sympathy costs her more than I can pay with my spinning. There is no meat in the pot. They laugh at you, but messire the curé will not laugh if he sees you dancing longer here."

He was harder to chase into the house than an obdurate gander, and no spoon could fill Choux's mouth too full for talk. Mengette was glad when he turned into his lair for the night. He slept in a room which could be entered only from the garden; and though there was a chimney in it, he would not build himself a fire or permit one to be lighted on his hearth. He

liked darkness, and had none of the craving of age for heat.

But Mengette was glad of her own fagots when she hooked the doors and opened her bed for the night. The light seemed a protection from the voice which talked with Choux in darkness, often alternating its high boyish note with Choux's deliberate croak half the night. Formerly when any neighbor came in after nightfall Choux kept silent; but since this unseen person, whom he called Valentin, had begun to visit him, he was so insolently noisy that Mengette dared not forecast what suspicions of sorcery he might bring upon himself. She felt the shame of an accomplice in trying to endure this invisible creature, who doubtless ought to be proclaimed and put out of the house; but Mengette shrunk from meddling in any way with the unusual. She wanted the natural things of life to surround and protect her from visions and voices.

A hand was on the door, and she unfastened it to admit Isabel Romée and Jacquemine.

The strong features of Jeanne's mother were thinned as by long illness. She did not cast her eye around with the usual oversight of Mengette's housekeeping. The pots were in a neat row, and the hearth was scoured white, and Jacquemine felt satisfaction in sitting down before blazing fagots in this house where he was to be master. All three were silent, speechless trouble driving Choux and his voice out of Mengette's mind.

Isabel put both hands over her face and leaned forward sobbing.

"Pierrelo has come back from Vaucouleurs alone."

"I know it, godmother. I saw him between Domremy and Greux when I was driving in the geese."

"My child has gone into France! I shall never see her again."

"She will come home sometime, godmother."

"No; she will come home no more. I was sure of that from the first; but when I saw him riding by himself, it seemed that I had never known it. Did Pierre tell you he brought a letter from her?"

"He showed me a folded paper."

"Her father sits by the hearth, and will not turn his head. The letter has been in his hand since the curé read it to us. She had it written by a clerk at Vaucouleurs, and put her own cross-mark on it, asking forgiveness. My Jehannette is a good child. I am myself to blame for urging her to marriage. In Vaucouleurs they have a revereuce for her. Pierre says she rode out in man's clothes, and all the people wept. He would have gone on her track, but Durand Laxart did us this grace: he made Pierre come home. Jacques told you the Duke of Lorraine sent from Nancy for Jehannette to pray for his recovery."

"She is a good pucelle, godmother. When she told me the saints spoke to her, I could not help believing it."

Isabel shook her head. The vigorous woman, who had little bent toward the superstition of her time, still denied Jeanne's visions. Saints certainly existed in a far-off place called heaven, but it was not likely they troubled themselves about anything in this world. Isabel considered them vaguely benevolent, but much taken up with tuning harps and singing. More than

all, she felt it impossible that such holy beings should stoop to members of her own family. In other ages and countries heaven had communicated with blessed martyrs: but St. Michael had never shown himself in her garden behind the church; the child had dreamed it.

She wiped her face, raising it to meet what was yet in store for her.

"And now we must lose Pierrelo. In the spring, when the hermit friar sets out for Tours, the curé will ask him to take Pierrelo to Jehannette. The lad can hardly wait our consent."

Jacquemine sat with his knees braced together and both hands resting on them. He now spoke out with virtuous determination:

"Myself, I will never forsake my father and mother to go to the wars, even with their consent."

"You!" flashed Isabel, unreasonably resenting on him the pain inflicted by those she loved better. "Yes; Jacquemine will stay at home and be a daughter to us."

Jacquemine burned scarlet, the blood submerging his freckles and mounting into his sandy hair. Mengette resolved that when he became her husband she would never make his eyes fill so piteously. She said to him, "Sit closer to the fire, Jacquemine," and he did so, feeling that his part was taken and comfort offered him. She understood a home-keeping nature. Mengette would not have left Domremy for the crown of France. She loved to do the things she was accustomed to do, and sometimes thought of Choux's death almost with grief because, though it would permit her marriage, it must change her employment. The longer

she was betrothed to Jacquemine the more satisfaction she took in the arrangement, though there was little chance for courtship, Isabel being watchful, and Mengette having that discretion which is given to some girls instead of mothers.

Isabel scarcely noticed them. She stared into space, wondering at the nature that had outgrown her guidance. It had been her delight to train Jeanne, the child was so docile and so responsive to good. Jeanne's eyes would fill with tears at sight of any suffering. No wonder the troubles in France had swept her away.

"But where is she now?" exclaimed Isabel. "My child is somewhere out in the night, with only men around her!" The room again resounded with unrestrained mourning.

"No one would hurt Jehannette," declared Mengette. "It is true the men were all put under oath by the Captain of Vaucouleurs to conduct her in safety, and Pierrelo says they are very trusty men, and Bertrand de Poulengy is of the party. But my heart has begun to misgive me about Bertrand de Poulengy. One is afraid of everything when one's child is no longer under the roof. What is that?" demanded Isabel, with sudden attention. "I hear a stranger in Choux's room."

Mengette swallowed her voice, and knew that her heart was beating audibly. A rapid, boyish treble rose higher and higher in Choux's chamber, and ended in shrill laughter. Jacquemine drew closer to the hearth, fading to ghastliness in the increased light, and seeking Mengette's eye for companionship. He had heard Choux boast in the wine-shop of this nightly

visitor, and had laughed at it; for then it was broad daylight, and nobody believed a word Choux said.

Isabel turned to her goddaughter, who knew that the moment for telling the truth had come. "What stranger is staying in your house?"

"It is no person at all, godmother. It is nothing but a voice. Choux says it comes and talks to him every night, and he calls it Valentin."

Choux's croak and Valentin's high note jangled rapidly together, stopping on Isabel's lips the accusation of trickery. Her face became stupid with astonishment, the blankness changing to a look of humiliation.

"How long has he had this voice?"

"Not very long, godmother. Only a few months."

"Why have you not told me?"

Mengette picked at her petticoat, and answered, "I did not like to."

"These things put me out of patience," said Isabel, fiercely. "I wonder what is abroad in the world, that even old Choux hath taken to him a familiar spirit? Run home, Jacquemine, if you have so much fear. As for me, voices and visions have broken my heart. They can no longer fright me."

"I was but thinking that the curé should come with a censer," Jacquemine answered, shrinking against the chimney.

"The curé should come with a stout club. Did Jehannette ever hear this voice of Choux's?"

"No; I am certain she never did. I alone have heard it, for they were not so bold with their talking before Jehannette went away."

The contrasted laughter of cackling age and shrill

youth filled the next chamber. Jacquemine repeatedly crossed himself against that unrestrained second presence, which grew more tangible to the imagination than Choux's head in its red cap.

Isabel lost no time, but thumped on the partition with her knuckles. It was a stone wall, but an open cupboard was let into it, making a good conductor of sound.

"Choux, stop that noise!"

There was silence. Then the young voice in mimicry repeated Isabel's command like an echo.

"Mengette shall not stay in the house with you, and no one in this village will feed you, if this sorcery be not stopped. If you must play your tricks with Satan, go out in the fields, where Christian folks cannot hear. I am going to sleep here with Mengette, and I will have you up before messire the curé if that limb of the fiend makes any more disturbance to-night."

There was a flurry of whispering, and when it ceased Choux lifted his husky voice to defy a woman he dreaded, but who stood at the other side of a wall. "Limb of the fiend be named thyself, Isabel Romée. Valentin, whom thou hast frighted off, is as honest a creature as any saint that ever went walking in thy own garden. It would have been better to listen to news from thy maid, who never stood in such peril as she stands in this night."

"Such mock messengers bring no word for me. And now, mind what I tell thee: whether thou hast a familiar or art practising trickery, there shall be no more of it in this house."

Isabel listened austerely; but when she turned from silencing Choux her face had many more haggard lines, which were not the marks of fear. He had cunningly reminded her that Jeanne was sleeping in the open fields. The mother's thoughts tried to bridge darkness, roaming indefinitely southwestward, and having no means to come at the actual spot near the river Aube.

By bridle-paths and across country the riders from Vaucouleurs had achieved more than nine leagues the first day, and the same distance the second. The first night they were received at the Abbey of St. Urbain, in what is now the department of Haute-Marne, but the next night brought them to more dangerous ground. They descended into a valley near the little town of Bar-sur-Aube, and, avoiding it, forded the river some distance north of the walls. The place they selected for their camp was a cove between two shoulders of the winding hills. Some leafless trees sheltered it. Already there were monitions of spring in the air, and a faint green light, like the tender apple-green of the Meuse, swam in motes between one's eyes and gray slopes, until the world was blurred by night. Houses on the walls began to shine like candles. Jeanne's party lighted no fire, but ate cold bread and meat, and drank their wine, she sitting a little apart from the men, and the servants taking their portion to themselves.

The dauphin's messenger was a lean, light man in the saddle, running over with jokes and songs, which he could hardly suppress in the presence of the maid

he was conducting; but he was the first one to wrap himself well in his cloak and lie down for the night. It had been agreed that the maid was to be guarded between Jean de Metz and Bertrand de Poulengy. These were Baudricourt's orders when camp was made under the open sky. So she lay down betwixt knight and squire, with her peasant dress under her head for a pillow; and the old soldier was soon asleep. But the young one lay awake, with his face away from the cloaked maid whom he had so desired for his wife.

She slept with regular, low breathing, as unconscious of his presence as when he rode behind her all day. She had no armor. It was not necessary for him to serve her as squire; but he could watch unceasingly her gay eagerness to get forward, her steadiness in fording deep water, the curve of her back where waist met hips, and even the blush of tan beginning to tint ears and cheeks under her soldier's cap. He lay near enough to put his hand upon her, yet he had never in his life felt so remote from Jeanne d'Arc.

Tears swelled his eyeballs and choked his throat. The boy ground his teeth with an oath between them, changing his oath to a prayer, the anguish and unendurable contradictions of life filling him full to the lips. In starting to the wars he had counted on a sublime self that had been wearied out of his body, a high, priestly fellow with no personal needs whatever; and here he was the same Bertrand de Poulengy, heartsore, and full of fierce youth and desire. But while he lay with his back toward Jeanne, and his fists clenched, feeling like a dog,—a faithful, worshiping

dog, yet one that was never to be rewarded by a pat, —some of the peace which enveloped her came over him. His blood ceased its rapid beating, and external things seemed to approach in a new way to divert and comfort him. He folded his arms and turned his face toward the sky. Humid night air, chill earth, and vapor-strewn stars became forces for him to resist hardily, with patience, as a man, and with a kind of toughening of the spirit. There was not one bitter or unsound spot in the boy.

"By the time down has grown stiff on my lip," thought Bertrand, "and I have seen something of battle, I shall bear this without making a fool of myself."

Couvre-feu had already rung in Bar-sur-Aube; the lights were out; no noises came from the town. The full river whispered. Without knowing it, the voices of the two sullen soldiers and Richard the archer, who had ridden with the messenger from Chinon, encroached more and more upon the silence. Bertrand knew they were sullen. He had seen them scowl when they rubbed down the horses, and wink derisively at one another when the maid went into a thicket with her rosary in her hand. One underthought of his wakefulness was to watch these men. The archer had been left on guard, to be followed by his companions in turn; but all three heads were yet clustered together, as they had sat at their bread and meat, with a bottle going round from mouth to mouth. Peril enough attended this journey to Chinon without seeking any in the camp. Peril in the camp, however, will soon come seeking him who lets it be. Bertrand

rested on his elbow and listened. He would have crept toward the men, but the letter of his oath bound him to his place by Jeanne's side during a night in the fields. Three dim shapes against the darkness of the hills, Richard the archer and the two soldiers pushed their voices farther and farther into the cove. The humid air carried cautious sounds in full volume to the listener.

"If the lot fell to me I would do it," spoke the archer. "We have had enough of this witch-work. Let us be rid of her."

"Since it comes to sleeping on the ground," said one soldier.

Bertrand's weapons, which hung from his belt when it was clasped, now lay within a fold of his cloak. He took the small ax and held it ready.

A murmur of urging and fragments of words reached his ears. He caught, without distinctly hearing, the men's determination to throw the maid into the Aube, and then desert with the horses; and reaching cautiously over Jeanne, he prodded De Metz with the ax-handle. De Metz slept on like an honest man. Bertrand thought this movement of his was seen by the soldier on whom the lot had evidently fallen; for the man paused in stealthy approach, and slunk back to his fellows, being met by a low growl like reviling.

Richard the archer, standing a foot above his companions, next stepped forward, and Bertrand held the ax ready to split his head as he stooped. But two lance-lengths beyond the reach of the guardian's arm he seemed to find a barrier that he could not pass, and collapsing backward as if he had already received a

blow, scrambled on hands and knees toward his mates, who uttered a sound of panic.

Bertrand's blood was all alive, forgetting depression and the chill of the earth. Jealous of his right to protect the maid, he said to himself, "I will not wake De Metz." His own part of secrecy and silence amused him, and he tingled with laughter at the futile attempts.

"The poor fools really have no harm in them; they are only discontented; and when they have done easing full minds on one another they will go about their business."

Yet he determined to see that they went about their business, and clasping on his weapons, he stood up to follow them. A swift smiting of light on the eyeballs, like that which flashes within the lid when sight struggles in pitch darkness, showed him the archer and both soldiers crouching a few feet away.

"What are you doing there?" he demanded; but they did not hear him. They did not look at him. A thinning of the dimness around, like the shadowed edge of light, revealed their staring eyes and the separate hairs bristling on their unshaven jaws.

Jeanne had risen to her knees betwixt De Metz and Bertrand, her muffled figure bent forward, the fixed curve of her body, the very threads of her cloak, whitened strangely in the night. No visible hovering presence poured glory on her, yet she shone. Her squire, still holding the ax, crossed his hands on his bosom, feeling drenched by some divine power.

Long after Jeanne lay down from her half-conscious prayer, breathing like a healthy child, and long after

archer and soldiers, separating in silence, had taken to watch or to hiding, Bertrand stood with his hands crossed on his breast. He knew that he should never speak of this night except lightly, but he wondered what terror there could be for ignorant men in that instant's glow which had rested on the maid.

IV

CHINON CASTLE stood among clouds above the compact walled town of Chinon, huge and white, buttressed along the cliffs, showing all its towers and battlements, from the horologe portal to an ancient Roman round fortress at its extremity, as the riders from Vaucouleurs approached it at sunset. The valley of the river Vienne, like so many of the valleys of France, stretched from the foot of sheer heights to far blue alluvial hills. Touraine was a rich country even then, when large tracts of the realm lay waste and unproductive year after year. The forward spring made a blur like green light over massed distances, showing, as no single tree by the river could do, revival of life in buds.

Some fishermen were in a boat, poling over the rocky bottom of the Vienne. Its dark-green water in shady places took the color of ale. As the party from Vaucouleurs crossed the bridge, the town gates were opened, and the dauphin's messenger came out to meet them.

"You have made good speed to-day without me,"

he said, wheeling his horse to enter beside De Metz, who led the company; "but it is a plain journey from St. Katherine de Fierbois to Chinon. How many masses did the maid hear yesterday while she rested in the church of St. Katherine?" [1]

"Only three," answered De Metz. His smile was indulgent, but the courtier's was mocking. "And every man of us, constrained to rub his knees so long on that stone floor, was fain to envy you riding forward at ease, with a letter to the dauphin, and the end of the journey in sight."

The horses neighed when the gates closed after them, scenting shelter and provender. Nimble-footed, they picked their way through lanes of overhanging houses crowded to the hill beneath the castle buttresses, remembering no more their twelve days' beating across varying soils of France. By way of Auxerre, Gien, Salbris, Ramorantin, Selles, St. Aignan, Loches, and the parish church of St. Katherine de Fierbois, they had brought their riders without mishap to Chinon. The horse which Durand Laxart had provided for Jeanne stepped soberly behind De Metz's; her squire reined his, more spirited, a pace behind. Two or three church towers seemed to hold the light of the March sunset which ascending little streets so readily lost.

"Deputies from Orléans are now at the castle," said the dauphin's messenger; "they have come to hasten this business about the maid."

"I call that good news," answered the knight. "And since the expense of this expedition has rested

[1] St. Catherine's name is thus spelled in all records concerning this parish church.

on me, and the three troublesome knaves behind our backs are certain to demand their pay at once, the dauphin will doubtless soon put my mind at rest about the scores."

"Oh, doubtless; or Messire Alan Chartier will make you a song which will give your mind great ease. We will all share our tranquillity with you; but if you expect to find any money at Chinon you will be disappointed. Jacques Cœur of Bourges is the only man in this poor kingdom that hath any gold; and sage as that generous goldsmith is, he will be stripped before this business with England be finished. I myself am used to eating sheep's legs at Chinon, where the king hath not even a comfit-box to pass to the ladies. But if I told other good fellows at court that you came with a full pouch, you would not have pieces enough to divide among the borrowers."

"In that case the dauphin might as well stand indebted to me. In truth, this is the first time I have taken thought about my money, for the maid was welcome for her own sake, and I must abide by the good or bad that comes of this venture. But I hope we shall have leave to go to Orléans soon."

"I think myself it promises well that the envoys from Orléans are here. But a king is not the only person that governs a realm, Messire de Metz."

A few dogs barked at the cavalcade, but the quiet villagers paid little attention to it. There was much coming and going betwixt court and distressed kingdom. A man blind in his left eye and lame in his right foot was dipping a two-handled jug in the public fountain, and singing. The sweet, tremulous tenor

spread through the valley, and followed Jeanne as she ascended to the castle, like music sent to encourage her.

The dauphin's messenger made his party dismount at the inn, where the horses were to be left, and where even the big cook, white as flour from head to foot, came out to help hold bridles; and he then took the most direct path, which was a paved gutter between walls scarcely two arms' lengths apart. A door stood open at one side, showing a dark interior, lighted only by a red hearth with a child's head against the shine, and Bertrand was startled to see that these continuous walls were house-fronts. Voices of women were heard talking within the stone. A thread of water moved down the depressed center of the way. Winding, this path led up to a broad track which turned upon itself and faced the castle. Chinon had been a favorite seat of English kings before it passed into the hands of the French. A huge gray ruin, the ancient Abbey of St. George extended along the height like a detached outwork of the castle. Its thick walls had been burrowed into by poor wretches who stood gaunt-faced at their doors and looked at the arriving maid. Living so near the royal gates, they had heard of her, and they witnessed the insolence of a drunken soldier who came down the slope and boldly stumbled against her. Bertrand de Poulengy struck him out of the way.

"Jarnedieu!" the soldier snarled, using the common oath of his class.

"Dost thou jarnedieu," said Jeanne, piteously, turning to follow him with her eyes—"thou who art so near death?"

The warder lowered a long drawbridge across the moat, and the clock struck high above their heads as they passed through the tower of the horologe. From this portal a sunken road guarded by masonry ascended to a wide garden. The glow of sunset lingered on winding paths, and masses of trees, and banks where roses would be rankly abundant in their season. Though birches, oaks, and shrubs were yet leafless, they almost hid the royal château, to which it seemed a far cry from the gate. Nothing was spoken until the party came to this pile, buttressed along the cliff, and looking with large stone-cased windows over valley and height.

"This is the middle château, where the king rests," said the royal messenger; and Jeanne would have turned aside to the great entrance.

"You are not to be lodged here," he told her; "you go yonder to the tower of Coudray, beyond the inner moat."

They passed the long palace side, seeing no face look down in welcome, and crossed the bridge over the inner moat. Instead of water a fleece of springing grass covered the depths of this wide and sheltered moat. A curtain of stone connected a high tower on the moat bank with another battlemented tower built into the buttressed cliff wall. There was an archway in the curtain at the end of the bridge, through which they passed to the tower of Coudray on the right hand. It rose between two wings of masonry. The farther one was expanded to a chapel, but the nearer one seemed merely a sheltered entrance to a stone staircase built up to the first floor of the tower. Joints of creepers

clung about its corners and massed over its sashless window. Wherever a rock had crumbled, little tufts of green were coming generously out to meet the Touraine sun.

"Ascend here, pucelle," said the dauphin's messenger; "and wait until I see the king. Women will be sent to attend you. Here is better footing than on the inner stairs."

"But when shall I see the dauphin?" inquired Jeanne. Her guide made a gesture which counseled patience.

"It hath struck seven of the clock," ventured Bertrand. "Perhaps his Majesty is now at supper."

"The king dines at seven in Chinon," said the messenger; "and I have never seen him so bent on affairs of state that he abated his natural habits."

"Messire Colet," said Jeanne, using her guide's name with a power of entreaty which pierced a courtier's indifference, "go you at once to the dauphin, and tell him I am here and must see him."

"It shall be done, pucelle; but you yourself need food; and rest also you need after ten days in the saddle, and no repose and comfort except what you could take upon your knees on the stones of St. Katherine de Fierbois."

Jeanne turned laughing from her ascent of the stairs, and clapped her guide on the back with a sudden palm.

"I wish I had ten thousand such men as these, all armed and equipped, and ready to march this minute. We would make short work of the English in France."

The astonished messenger saw her shut the door

of the tower before he turned to De Metz and the squire.

"Hath she not a strange effect on a man? You would say she is a child driven by some power toward bloody war; yet when you see her riding at speed, with her throat swelled out and her shoulders back, or when she rouses you with a stroke like that, you want to unsheathe a sword and shout."

He led Jeanne's escort around to the front of the tower, where a door let them into a dark circular inclosure.

"I call this a beastly place," growled the archer. "In Vaucouleurs we had better stables for cattle."

"This dungeon is only the guard-room of the tower," said the messenger; "but over yonder, beyond St. Martin's Chapel, we have some deep underground cells, with irons in the walls, for such fellows as you, my good bowman. If you bring a proud stomach to Chinon, you will be let down out of daylight, as many a better man hath been before your time."

"A soldier needs nothing but a bench and the earthen floor," said De Metz; "but I would be glad to know that the maid hath better accommodations above."

"She has two commodious chambers, one over the other, for herself and the ladies who will be sent to bear her company. And now, messire knight, set your guard, and I will show you and the squire where you are to lodge."

"Let me stay with the guard until company is sent to the pucelle," requested Bertrand; and his forwardness was not rebuked. He sat down near the door,

Richard the archer being left as sentinel at the foot of the inner stairs. Richard could see nothing but cross-traeery of distant boughs or chapel walls through the door, while his watcher could also see the Roman tower, and much nearer something like a colossal chimney-top standing half the length of a man above ground. While Bertrand sat there some serving-men descended into it by means of a ladder, and he learned afterward that it was an entranee to the subterranean storehouses of the eastle.

Ten days' resentment broke silenee with the archer. "I need no spy over me, messire innkeeper. I stood at guard before thou wert born."

"Age never improves a knave," retorted Bertrand. "Stand baek, there! I would as lief stiek thee in the ribs as not. I have searce been able to keep my hands off thee and thy two fellows sinee the night by Bar-sur-Aube."

Though far from claiming social equality with the squire, the bowman resented being ranked with servant-soldiers who had not yet risen to be men-at-arms. In every body of troops the archers were most numerous. A lifetime of practice went to the making of their skill, while any varlet could soon learn the trade of man-at-arms. Richard eoarsely sneered and put his knuekles on his hips at mention of his two fellows, but his faee changed at mention of the night by Bar-sur-Aube.

"Come," said Bertrand, "tell me what you saw, and I will never mention the matter to the dauphin. The pueelle is now safe in Chinon, but he might clap you in irons for conspiring to drown her, if he knew it.

I will pledge you also the silence of Messire de Metz, though we are both resolved you go no farther in our company. What made you three knaves pick up your heels every time you approached her?"

"I do not know, messire." Richard's eyes were uneasy and his figure was dejected.

"Did you see any apparition?"

"I will tell thee, Messire de Poulengy, I am glad this business is done, and I wish to be no more about the maid. While no man likes spying, I am well enough pleased to have thee on that bench as twilight falls, before torch be lighted in this vault."

"What did you see at Bar-sur-Aube?" Bertrand repeated with impatience.

"Nothing, messire—nothing. It was the feeling. We all had it. I would rather be scalded with boiling oil, or take a shaft through my body, than ever have it again. She may be a maid of God, but my flesh creepeth on coming near her. Something hath guard over her that an honest soldier cannot abide."

"You did not see the awful archangel St. Michael hovering above her?"

"No, messire."

"You did not see St. Margaret and St. Catherine, one on each side of her, St. Margaret's dragon trailing across De Metz, and St. Catherine resting her wheel on a fold of my cloak?"

"No, messire," the bowman answered, a shudder going with his words.

"It is well for you that you did not see them. The sight of them slays men that have the intention to do murder."

"I pray God I may never see them," said Richard, devoutly.

"Although you are a sinful man," observed Bertrand, "I think your prayer will be answered. And see to it, you three, that you make early confession. It is dangerous to be in the neighborhood of such a maid with sin on your conscience."

"We are all agreed on that, messire. At first I thought she was a witch; but now, though I have such terror of her as I never had of woman, I know she is not holpen of the devil."

"You would be more at your ease in her company if she were?"

"Yes, messire; whereas, after that feeling she gave me, I am loath even to swear in her hearing."

"That must work you great discomfort. The knight of Novelopont will get you placed where you can curse in peace, and kill with more advantage to the dauphin."

The rush of women's clothes, rather than the sound of footsteps, startled the squire from his bench. As he hurried past the window of that extension which sheltered the outer staircase, he saw two figures ascending. One was an elderly woman, servant or duenna, and before her ran, light-footed, a creature of elegant back, wearing a high conical head-dress from which floated a cloud of gauze.

"These be the dames sent from court," thought Bertrand.

But Jeanne, sitting in the upper chamber by a window overlooking valley and middle château, turned at the small pat of footsteps, and saw only a maid entering from the stairs.

It was a delicately fashioned, blue-eyed, white and rose-red maid, with square brows and a full, oval face. The hair was drawn up from her high forehead and concealed under her head-dress. Though the face was shown thus freely, and all of the well-set neck, its sweet modesty was its first charm. Jeanne stood up to receive her, but she made a gesture of greeting, and drew a chair for herself near the window, measuring Jeanne's male hose and cuirass with the swift and critical inspection of youth.

"You are the maid from Vaucouleurs?"

"Yes, demoiselle."

"I saw you pass under the château windows, and slipped away directly to see you. My name is Agnes Sorel. My aunt is lady in waiting to the Queen of Sicily, his Majesty's mother-in-law."

She drew in her breath with pretty haste, and added: "Let us have some talk before the old duennas come. You are to have two of the most tiresome women at court put in here to take care of you. By that arrangement we get rid of them, and they feel their selection a mark of royal favor."

"I did not come to women; I came to see the dauphin," said Jeanne.

"Here we do not say the dauphin," observed Agnes. "Charles is our king, having been consecrated at Poitiers. That little beast Louis, the king's son, is the dauphin; and if he lives—which God forbid!—will some day be Louis XI of France, provided the English leave us any France."

The eagerness of the one, so unlike the quiet power of the other, seemed to work a sudden embarrassment

between the two maids. Agnes, however, drew her chair still nearer to Jeanne. In this high tower a primrose daylight lingered, reflecting its glow upon them from the circular stone walls. No tapestry was hung here, but both bedchambers of Coudray were provided with all that women then used in their dressing- and sleeping-rooms.

"Do you like to wear the habit of a man?"

"The habit matters nothing," answered Jeanne. "I am obliged to wear it to do what I am sent to do."

"And will you really ask the king to send you to war?"

"I will go to-morrow, demoiselle, if he but give me men-at-arms."

Agnes rested her full, oval chin on a hand so sensitively white and fine that Jeanne reflected that it could never have twisted wool betwixt finger and thumb, or washed at the river.

"One can see you are no fool. I have myself sometimes felt in a rage to go to war, or to do anything which would stir this lazy Charles. He is the sweetest king that ever drew breath. Do you see that great stone shaft on the back of the middle château?" she suddenly inquired. "That is an oubliette. The courtiers say nothing about it, but every one knows it is an oubliette, and is entered from the upper floor of the château. There a trap drops one to the very depths of this rock, and a sluice carries one's body into the river, and no person the wiser, and all trace lost. Oh, many a king has dropped his enemies down that oubliette; but Charles has never used it in his life. I should use it. Long since would that machinery

have been oiled and set in motion if I had been king, and the first person sent down the shaft would have been Georges la Trémouille."

"Who is Georges la Trémouille?"

"Did you never hear of the king's favorite? If France be altogether lost to the English, it will be his fault. Indeed, there is not a soul near the king who cares what becomes of France, unless it be the Queen of Sicily, who has bestirred herself for all the troops raised. I despise king's favorites," said the child courtier, with fervor. "I am only poor Agnes Sorel of Loches, but I can see through that La Trémouille. He will not suffer any one to be near Charles except himself, and hath even sent the queen away to tend the nursery of the little beast of a dauphin. Yet he loves neither the king nor the realm. He simply wishes to be master at court. You will have to pass him before you get leave to face the English, pucelle. My aunt has heard it said he is in league with them. He has a château at Sully-sur-Loire, near Orléans; but the English, however they go about meddling with France, never trouble him."

Agnes lifted a finger to silence her own rapid talk, and turned her head to listen as the woman who had entered the tower with her repeated a call on the stairs.

"Your old cats are coming, pucelle. I am warned to go."

"Will you carry a message for me to the dauphin, demoiselle?"

"Gladly would I; but my aunt does not yet permit me to have speech with the king. I am too young and insignificant. I am not of the court, indeed, but only

taking a peep at it from my convent at Loches, to be sent directly back. But I can use my eyes and ears, and they should be serviceable to you if my aunt permitted me to stay at Chinon."

She had reached the stairs. She turned and faced the tall maid standing in man's clothes against the fading window. They looked at each other with a long look. Agnes Sorel's face whitened with passionate earnestness, forecasting the power of her maturity, when she should be called "belle des belles," and reign like a queen for the good of the kingdom.

"Pucelle, I may never see you again. We are very different, but we both love France. And I shall love France better as long as I live because I have seen you. Good day."

"Good day, demoiselle. Pray for me."

V

STARS came out over Chinon, and the air was warm, unlike the crisp March night air of Domremy. Jeanne had eaten her supper, but she remained by the upper window of the tower thinking of her coming audience with the dauphin. She could not sleep, as did the two elderly ladies of the court in the chamber under her; but, sitting on the broad sill, she watched the lights of the middle château, and harkened to sounds across the moat.

There were delicious strains of music, sometimes a roar of laughter, or a hint of women's voices rising and falling in chorus. Jeanne heard the clock strike in its high, distant place; but time was nothing to these courtiers in the middle château, who, according to the words of the young demoiselle, cared so little what became of France. To a Lorraine peasant the sovereign was more sacred than the nearest relation. She was angry with his friends; and when a flare of torch-light came around the front of the palace, the maid leaned out amazed.

Muffled ladies lifting their long mantles from the

damp of the ground, and men in rich colors and plumed hats picking their way with pointed shoes, flocked toward her tower across the moat bridge. Jeanne's heart pounded in her side. It could not be that the dauphin was sending this gay train to bring her into his presence. But she saw Charles himself in the midst of it. Where was there a child in the Meuse valley who did not know the traits of the house of Valois? Burgundy, the younger branch of this house, brought forth strong, dark men; Orléans, the kingly branch, men of sanguine complexion and soft hair. Yet all had the same aquiline features, marked chins, and outward turning of the edges of the lips. Jeanne needed no one to show her the dauphin, stepping between torch-bearers, in a long robe which covered him, the smoke filming above his fair head, his laughing, unconcerned eyes roving the little world about him.

With a patter like a flock of sheep the light footsteps of the company wheeled to the left, and they went on with their torches to the battlemented tower of Boissy, followed by a long, gay fellow in black, carrying in his arms an instrument on which he made tripping melody as he went. Jeanne could see from her height the flat top of the tower of Boissy, with its parapet of stone. The curtain of masonry along the moat ran like a path from one tower to the other. Torchmen stepped outside the parapet, and stood on an open stone platform supporting the battlements, and in the ring of smoky light which they formed the lute struck up, and Charles's little court, hilarious with its freak in the mild March night, flung mufflers aside, and made the pavement resound with their dancing.

Orléans was nearly surrounded by the English, and whole villages in France stood as empty as kennels. In the Solange country there had been no plowing or sowing for years, and women as gaunt as wolves tried to nourish little living skelctons at their breasts. Robbers were in every province. The infant king of England was crowned in Paris, while the dauphin of France had neither army nor crown; his last hope was slipping from him with Orléans: and he and his people went merrily out in the night to dance on the top of a tower!

It was not until the next evening that the ladies who attended Jeanne came to tell her that the king was ready to give her audience. All day she had been tormented by courtiers, who ran up the stairs to look at her, or followed her into the chapel of St. Martin, where she went to pray. One was a lean boy in a page's dress, who craned his neck around a pillar of the chapel; the corners of his mouth turned upward with the habit of laughter. She felt moved to put on a calm front while she was watched, and to let none of them catch her weeping; so, with a quick pass of her hands through her short hair, she said to those prudent ladies whom Agnes Sorel called the old cats:

"En nom Dé, if the dauphin be ready to see me, take me before him at once."

They first took her, with the gentle hands of women accustomed to robe royalty, to a long garment lying ready upon a bench, and one of them began to unfasten her cuirass.

"What are you doing?" asked Jeanne.

"Preparing you for audience with the king. One must put on a court dress when one goes to court."

"I never in my life trailed cloth after me on the ground. I cannot wear it," said Jeanne, eying the folds doubtfully; "let me be as I am."

"But thou art a maid," urged one of the dames. "It is not fitting that a maid should go before the king in man's tunic and hose."

"Then I will put on my short peasant dress, that I brought behind my saddle from Vaucouleurs."

"But the king," suggested one of the ladies, for neither of the two found her easy to command, "is a nice observer of women's clothes. I remember hearing him praise to the queen a hennin that had the front bent down to make scallops along the brow."

"What have I to do with hennins?" exclaimed Jeanne. "What are hennins?"

"Hennins are high, pointed head-coverings."

"The kind of hennin for me is a casque of steel. You cannot make a court lady of me." Curious and impatient, she examined the long dark robe edged with white, unwilling to be rude to the two shadow-like attendants. Her young delight in colors and her sense of what was fitting for Jeanne d'Arc rejected it. "Give me my cloak."

"But will you not put on the court dress?"

"The high steward is waiting to conduct you," said the other lady, "and time presses."

"En nom Dé, I will go to the dauphin as I am."

An ascent of broad steps gave entrance to the great hall of the middle château. Sixty feet distant, at the end of the vaulted room, was a chimney of white stone

with square pillars upholding its penthouse. A pair of andirons with posset-cups stood nearly as high as the chimney-breast. A noble fire blazed here, reflected by the polished oak boards of the floor; candles were lighted, and fifty torches were fastened along the walls, burning clearly, and showing the whiteness of Chinon stone, which gave all masonry such a ghostly look by night; for the only pieces of tapestry were hung at the sides of the chimney, showing miracles performed by St. Martin. Each window, recessed in the thick wall, had its two opposite splayed seats of stone, worn by much lounging.

The court had gathered with full curiosity to see the sorceress. Though Chinon was a secure place, well removed from the seat of war, it was dull in the month of March before Easter festivities came on. Three hundred knights and nobles were in the hall, each wearing the color of the lady he affected; and beautiful, spirited women, priests and court officers, walked to and fro, carrying the light on their raiment. Their talk came to Jeanne, as she ascended, like the humming of bees.

Yolande, the dowager Queen of Sicily, stood kindly near the entrance to greet and put at ease a poor maid whom she had begged to have at Chinon. The young man-at-arms brought in by the high steward, with bare forehead and short hair flying about her delicate ears, confused the queen, who had herself sent a fitting court dress to the maid. While she looked for a timid peasant to follow this straight-limbed youth, Jeanne walked up the hall toward the dauphin.

He stood in the midst of courtiers, least distin-

guished of all by his dress; but she who had carried his image in mind from childhood could easily choose him. Charles was not more than ten years older than Jeanne. He had the beauty of young manhood, and was of an imposing figure out of armor, which betrayed the weak outline of his legs. The sweetest king who ever drew breath was languorous and gentle in his manner, kindly toward the pleasant side of the world, and most attractive to women.

The courtiers let Jeanne pass through the midst of them, regarding her with the eyes of people accustomed to laugh for pastime, until she reached the middle of the hall, when one of them stepped backward with continuous bowing, and directed her to a person gorgeous with decorations.

"The king."

"But why do you tell me that?" inquired Jeanne, surprised that they should want to make game of her serious business. Without pausing, she continued on her way to Charles, and knelt, bending her body almost to the ground.

"God give you good life, fair dauphin."

"I am not the king," said Charles, his smiling lips continuing the game.

"You are not yet the king, but you shall be. My name is Jeanne the maid. The King of heaven sends you word by me that you shall be anointed and crowned in the city of Rheims, and it is his pleasure that our enemies the English depart to their own country."

"How am I to know this?" Feeling the beauty of her voice, he looked into familiar eyes around for the

answering smile which often helped him to take serious matters lightly. His queen and his mother-in-law had urged him to seize any help, and the city of Orléans was wildly demanding this strange creature, who affected him, not as woman should affect man, but as some blameless and sexless knight dropped out of God knew where for his reproach. It would be said in every kingdom of Christendom that Charles of France was come to a pretty pass when he was obliged to take up with a peasant maid from the hills of Lorraine to lead his troops and fight his battles.

"My sign shall be the raising of the siege of Orléans."

The dauphin's eyes met the eyes of the deputies, and all three men agreed silently that she might well be used against the English if the people believed she could raise the siege.

The Queen of Sicily whispered with awe to ladies in waiting: "Not only did she know the king without ever having seen him, but she kneels as if brought up in a court."

"And I have a sign also for you alone, gentle dauphin," said Jeanne, "that I may not tell to any other ear."

"Come aside and tell it to mine alone, then," said Charles.

They stepped into a window recess, and stood between the two splayed seats, Charles with his back to the court. The cross of stone which parted the window into four oblongs of starlight was behind Jeanne. And much farther behind her, in the distant valley of the Meuse, was that past life from which she had come to these strange uses.

The courtiers talked among themselves, women's pointed hennins towering above men's heads; but every face, even that of the court poet leaning against a chimney pillar and noiselessly fingering his lute, was turned toward the dauphin and the maid.

Charles entered the alcove as a man submits himself to remedies unproved which he has half a mind to reject. In the middle ages sorcery was the unpardonable sin. The folly of having to do with a peasant would be nothing compared with the charge of helping himself by witchcraft. Yet this humble presence beside him, in the dress of a soldier, scarcely conscious of herself, was not like any creature who had in his lifetime been sent to the stake accused of meddling with devils.

Their talk in the window was so brief that the change in the dauphin startled his court. He turned about with a radiant face, and led the maid toward them by the hand. Never in the seven years of his uneasy reign—and those who knew him longest said never in his life before—had he been so jubilant.[1]

[1] "One day, at the period of his greatest adversity, the prince, vainly looking for a remedy against so many troubles, entered in the morning, alone, into his oratory, and there, without uttering a word aloud, made prayer to God from the depths of his heart that if he were the true heir, issue of the house of France (and a doubt was possible with such a queen as Isabel of Bavaria), and the kingdom ought justly to be his, God would be pleased to keep and defend it for him; if not, to give him grace to escape without death or imprisonment and find safety in Spain or Scotland, where he intended in the last resort to seek a refuge. This prayer, known to God alone, the maid recalled to the mind of Charles VII, and thus is explained the joy

"What hath she told him?" whispered a lady to the chancellor.

"Some remedy for the rot of sheep's feet," laughed the favorite at her ear. "Charles is a gentle king to please. But I will inquire, and bring you word of the wonderful token."

"Who is that man with his mouth awry?" asked Jeanne of the deputies from Orléans in the crowd that the dauphin brought about her.

"That is the chancellor of France, La Trémouille."

"I would there were more of the royal blood gathered here, for that would be the better for France."

Undismayed, she reviewed the knights and nobles, and in her mind estimated the value of each one. In an age of hand-to-hand combat the large, well-boned man promised best for fighting. Jeanne was a child in expression. She could not talk so that people would stand and listen to her from morning till night, as it was said a friar at Paris was then doing, but she had the sense of events. Insincerity was the life-breath of this court, which the Queen of Sicily frequented only for her daughter's sake. Its intrigues and jealousies and secret histories could not lie plainly open to the maid from Domremy; but she felt those tangles of human interests and petty spites, which

which, as the witnesses say, he testified whilst none at that time knew the cause. Jeanne by this revelation not only caused the king to believe in her; she caused him to believe in himself and his right and title: 'I tell thee on behalf of my Lord that thou art the true heir of France and son of the king.'"—Wallon, tome i., p. 32.

make the entire fabric of many lives, disturbing her large scheme.

Because Charles showed that he believed in her, his ladies came near and talked to her, looking less at her man-at-arms shoes. The chancellor asked her how she fared across country, and if she had heard on her journey the secret she told the king. Alan Chartier, the court poet, carrying his lute, and with his sugar-loaf hat hanging at his back by ribbons, lounged at her elbow, half insolent with the license of the court, half fascinated by a face rapt with purpose as he had never seen face before. Ashamed, Jeanne looked at them all, and wished they would quit making witty plays with words, and turn to the matter of Orléans; for, besides Charles and the deputies, there was no man in hall who willingly spoke of that besieged city.

Jeanne knew her brother Jacquemine could make the family miserable by his fretfulness. In a prince's household the tyranny of small over great natures was still the strange human law. Her first half-hour at court showed her how an insignificant man, rising by the power of his arrogance, could turn at will the fate of a kingdom. The courtier who had presented La Trémouille as her king jested less at her than at France.

The audience ended, and Jeanne went back to the tower of Coudray. Morning and noon and night grew and brightened and darkened over the white stones of Chinon, and morning came again. She knelt in the chapel of St. Martin for hours at a time, while spring mists approached from infinite depths of sky to

dampen the earth. The dampness became bold lines of rain, and threshed trees, streaming down walls and hissing against the buttressed heights. Almost before a downpour could thin, the sun broke through and printed a rainbow across the valley. The season continued to advance, though affairs in the kingdom stood still.

Bertrand took shelter at the foot of the outer stairway, leaning against the open window where he could watch these gathering and passing rains, with dull interest in their frequency. The tall youth in page's dress whom he had seen hanging about the chapel, and disapproved of as a spy upon Jeanne, entered boldly and made for the stairway. Bertrand took him by the collar, but allowed him to wrench himself loose and stand back.

"What business have you here, young messire?"

"I am sent to the pucelle."

"What 's your message?"

"I will even deliver that myself."

"I am her squire," said Bertrand.

"And I am sent to be her page," said the other.

"Who sent you?"

"The king."

"What is your name?"

"Louis de Coutes."[1]

Bertrand de Poulengy and Louis de Coutes eyed each other without favor.

"I am bid to wait on her," further declared Louis.

[1] Her page, Louis de Coutes, not Louis de Conte. (See "Grand List," or "Livre d'Or de Jeanne d'Arc," Bibliothèque Nationale.)

"Also, if she hath aught to set down in writing, I can do that, for I have learned the clerk's trade."

"You have learned the clerk's trade, have you? I thank God, my trade is that of arms. I carry neither quill nor train of lady's petticoat."

"No need to tell, messire squire, that you were not bred to courts. Panniers on your back, and wooden shoes on your feet—these are what you have carried."

"Children are better taught in my country," retorted Bertrand, flushing red.

"I am about four years younger than you are," calculated Louis, noting the squire's height and the down on his lip; "but if you will go beyond the pit with me, where no one is likely to see us, we will settle this matter now."

"There is more to you than I thought," Bertrand admitted. "I will not strike a man younger than myself. Go in graciously, and do your errand with the pucelle. If the dauphin sends her a page, it is none of her squire's business. But I would we were at Orléans, having some honest fighting, instead of lounging here against walls."

"You are not like to go to Orléans soon. The pucelle is to be sent farther south, direct to Poitiers."

Bertrand's solicitude, as keen as anguish, appeared in his face.

"Why to Poitiers?"

"Has not Poitiers been the capital of the kingdom since the loss of Paris?"

"What has the pucelle to do with that?"

"The king hath been advised to send her there to be examined by bishops and learned doctors of the

law. He would have their opinion on so rash a business as attempting to raise a siege by means of a maid. She is to come herself to the council-chamber, and take the word from his Majesty."

The dowager Queen of Sicily, who had been the first person to accept Jeanne publicly in hall, was not the last in council to see that the dauphin would lower himself before Christendom if he hastened to make use of this peasant without throwing the responsibility on the church. Queen Yolande was an energetic woman whose nervous hands did not often lie quietly in her lap, but fluttered in front of her like butterfly wings, bearing up and carrying abroad what she volubly said. She wished her daughter, poor Marie of Anjou, firmly seated in the kingdom of France. And, benevolent though her nature was, she wished disgrace might overtake La Trémouille, who stood leaning against the chimney in Charles's council-chamber, meditating on his own private intrigues, and on nothing else. The deputies from Orléans were urgent to have the maid at once.

"There are not at this time four pieces in the treasury, Messire de Beaucaire," said Charles to one of them.

"However, there is always Jacques Cœur of Bourges to advance money," put in Queen Yolande, her fingers fluttering down to withdraw the robe from her ankle, which she warmed at the hearth-corner. Three fleurs-de-lis on the huge tablet of iron which lined the chimney-back glowed red-hot above the burning wood.

"Jacques Cœur hath advanced much money already. The honest goldsmith may well laugh at securities

offered by this out-at-elbows court. We are not shot at by the English here, Messire de Tilloy, but we are jeered at by all Christendom. We would we had ten thousand men now on the march to Orléans; but we have not the means to equip a single man-at-arms. And we would the doctors in Poitiers had already approved of this maid as we do. But nothing is settled, and the affairs of this world cannot be hurried."

"The peasant's sign made good speed with your Majesty," La Trémouille said. "I would be glad to know that powerful sign myself."

Charles smiled at his favorite without replying, and one of the deputies declared: "By St. Martin! I would we had that other sign she promised to show before Orléans. Being sent in such haste, we are loath to go twenty leagues farther to Poitiers, and wait the slow deliberations of churchmen."

"If we were shod like you, Messire de Beaucaire," said Charles, "we would ride to Poitiers with pleasure. But when a king's shoes grow shabby and thin, he has some shame about showing himself at his capital in them."

"Has your Majesty pressingly commanded new footwear on account of going to Poitiers?" inquired the dowager. "I saw a man waiting in the antechamber as I came in, having shoes in his hand."

"Let him present himself here at once, in Heaven's name," said Charles, lounging over an arm of his chair, and sticking his foot out lazily. "Is this fit gear for a king to wear in council? France is indeed down at the heel. But we have yet resources when a man who hath not been three times paid since the

treaty of Troyes brings his wares, and patiently waits to have them tried on."

Being permitted to enter, the Chinon shoemaker came to his knees before his sovereign with such slovenly disregard of ceremony as would have got him a beating in the court of Burgundy. It was the impertinence of a humble creditor toward a debtor of high station. Royalty had sat so long over the villagers of Chinon that they regarded its luster a mere characteristic of that region, like the whiteness of their stone.

The Orléans deputies were impatient at Charles's dalliance over the fit of a shoe. He examined it well, and set his foot down with satisfaction.

"Now put on the other, my man."

"Not without my money, your Majesty," said the shoemaker.

La Trémouille laughed out loud at the crestfallen look of the sovereign of France.

"Come, good fellow," argued Charles, "it is like to make your fortune to be shoemaker to the king. Put on my shoe."

"It hath come nearer to making me a beggar. And I hold, your Majesty, that this shoe is mine until it be paid for."

"But the king cannot be seen in one new shoe and one old one."

"No, your Majesty; that would be unseemly. But since you have no new one of your own, it may well be avoided."

"You shall be paid, my friend. Go about your business."

"Without doubt I shall be paid, your Majesty; for

I intend to go about my business hereafter only to the buyer who hath money to his pouch."

Charles gave man and shoe a kick which sent them both half across the room. He thrust his foot into his old foot-gear, and his easy laugh followed the departing craftsman.

"That settles the question of our going to Poitiers. We must even continue to wear our old shoes. But we crave to have them greased. In a realm so impoverished as this it is asking much; but we do crave to have our old shoes greased."

"The king is a fop," laughed his chancellor. "He would even have his shoes greased when there is scarce fat enough in the château to grease the chops of his household."

"Not four pieces left in the treasury, and credit gone. A king that hath no credit with his shoemaker, what way can he turn?"

Charles lolled his head against the back of his chair, finding compensation in parading his poverty before the Orléans deputies.

"Bring in that maid who declares we shall be crowned at Rheims, and it is the will of God the English be driven out of France. It hath been our will seven long years, though that availed nothing. How we are to be crowned at Rheims, across leagues of hostile country, or even transported there with suitable retinue, God he alone knoweth."

"Did your Majesty hear," inquired Queen Yolande, "that the pucelle foretold the death of a soldier who met her at the gates, and that very hour he fell into the river and was drowned?"

"We had not heard it; but let her at once foretell the death of Bedford and a few of our other English friends."

"The story is quite true. She was heard by the beggars in St. George's Abbey. 'Dost thou jarnedieu,' saith the maid, 'when thou art so near death?' And that same hour he fell in the river and was drowned."

"What a waste of the material needed at Orléans!" observed La Trémouille. "I call your maid a harbinger of ill. It is only since she entered Chinon that the shoemaker refused credit and soldiers began to take to the river."

"If she be a harbinger of ill, she will take from the chancellor of France his occupation," gently responded the queen; "for things have gone from bad to worse ever since Messire la Trémouille came to dwell at court."

"She is the only person in this realm that hath ever brought a word of good news to Chinon. Let us have her in, to speak comfortably to us and console us for the shoemaker."

Jeanne was already waiting in the antechamber. The guard let her pass, and her page threw open the door. As at her first audience, she went directly to the dauphin, and fell on her knees. He changed his lounging attitude, sitting erect, and bringing his shabby shoes together, unmindful of their shabbiness. At his left hand La Trémouille leaned against the chimney; at his right knelt the maid who had told him the secret thought of his own heart. Her young face was worn and exalted by much suspense and prayer. Her innocent mouth and clear hazel eyes

moved Charles's sluggish religious nature as his confessor could not.

"Gentle dauphin, do not hesitate to take the help sent from God by me. My counsel have bid me tell you that no other can do what I am sent to do, not even the daughter of the King of Scotland. Go on hardily. Charlemagne and St. Louis are continually on their knees for France. God hath taken pity on us. Be not dismayed."

Charles raised her to stand beside him, and the envoys from Orléans drew nearer, feeling that attraction which even her enemies owned. The room was filled with one presence. She was as guiltless of desiring to please men as a statue on an altar, but she already transformed them by some indefinable power.

"Jeanne," said the dauphin, "we have just told these friends thou hast brought us the only good news we have had in years. We have faith in thee; but in order that others may have the same faith it is necessary to prove thee."

"Prove me before Orléans."

"But you ask for men-at-arms and equipments to raise the siege of Orléans. There are people who would say, 'If she be sent by God, what need hath she of men-at-arms?'"

"The men-at-arms will fight," answered Jeanne, "and God will give the victory." She laughed. "En nom Dé, we must help ourselves if we would be helped."

"Thou hast spoken truth there, pucelle," remarked Queen Yolande. "Money and provisions and succors are needed for Orléans. His Majesty should not ex-

pect to have miracles wrought for him, though I myself believe that, by the favor of the saints, miracles are about to be done."

"Jeanne," said Charles, "the most learned men of the kingdom will be called to Poitiers. We think it wise to send thee there to be questioned by them."

"What use is there, gentle dauphin, in setting learned men on to ask me questions? I know neither *a* nor *b*. I am sent, and my counsel have bid me go on."

"Who are your counsel, Jeanne?"

"My voices."

"Do you hear them continually?"

"One voice stays with me; another comes and goes, and visits me often; and with the third both deliberate."

She stood reserved, and after her words the room was full of silence. Turning her eyes from the royal face, she could see through a window the sweep of Chinon valley, and she saw it blurred by rain and tears. The delay and languor and inquisitiveness and timid wisdom which must call a conclave of bookish men to examine a plain message from Heaven astonished her.

"En nom Dé," said Jeanne, shaving tears from her cheek with her finger, and flinging them aside, "I shall have tough work there, but my Lord will help me."

VI

FIVE weeks after Jeanne had been sent from Chinon to Poitiers her brother Pierre and a churchman were moving southwestward through a wooded tract, with the intention of resting that night at Loches. Their horses were jaded by a long day's march, and picked a way slowly through the light woods. Here the growth was not dense, but tall-stemmed and open. Long before the travelers rode down to the meadow through which the Indre flowed, they had glimpses of it, a low-lying stream, full to its pretty green edges.

Pierre felt his blood stirred like sap by the April air blowing in his face. All things are young in April. He scarcely owned to being worn by the journey, though it had been a haphazard one without guide. Sometimes they wandered leagues out of their course. There was not much food to be found through France, and more than once they had slept in the open air. The Augustine monk, whose hermit life had inured him to hardships, bore these privations as well as Pierre did. It was not by Pierre's own desire that he was in such pious company. Jacques and Isabel had

put him in charge of a pilgrim to Tours. Where Tours was they did not know, except that they had heard it lay in the Touraine country, and the holy St. Martin had once been its bishop. If it proved a far cry from Tours to Chinon or Poitiers, they felt they could better trust their youngest son to Heaven alone at the end of the journey than to courtiers through all the dangers. For messengers from Poitiers came weeks before to Domremy, making inquiries about Jeanne. The curé testified. Mengette was questioned, and women came running from Greux to speak a good word for her. Even the daughter of Widow Davide stood out and praised her early playmate. Jeanne was being examined at Poitiers by strict and keen men; but if they thought to find her in ill repute in Domremy, where she was born, it was an impossible thing to do. A clerk took everything down in writing. Isabel and Jacques beheld this procedure without disapproval; but when Pierre would have set out with the returning company, they were positive against it. The season was yet too early. The envoys from Poitiers might be very grave men; but there was a graver, a hermit of the Vosges, whom the curé knew to be about returning to Tours. Pilgrimages were very common even at the most unsettled times. Isabel herself owed her surname of Romée to a godfather who had made a pilgrimage to Rome. In the Lorraine country gray friars, or Franciscans, were more in favor, being bound to the royal cause; but a black friar, especially one who had a name for sanctity, was better company for a lad starting to war than the best of courtiers.

Pierre had carefully gathered all he could concerning the route to be followed; and it had entered his mind, if the friar gave consent, they might part at Loches. For at Loches one had only to follow the course of the river Indre north until it turned westward to be led a long way toward Tours. But Poitiers was to be found in the south.

Moving as directly as they could through pathless woods, the friar jogging behind Pierre, having the hood of his black capote drawn over his head, and his eyes dropped to the ancient bed of the forest, they came where they could see freely, without passing sight through a network of trees, the open land and river, and cliffs beyond. A sweetness of leaf-mold came up with a penetrating quality like incense.

Pierre knew nothing about Loches or the approach to it, but he turned and spoke over his shoulder: "If we have been directed right, Brother Pasquerel, that must be the donjon of Loches, far off yonder against the sky."

"It is Loches," agreed Brother Pasquerel; "but it is half a day's journey distant yet."

"We have some hours before nightfall. Let us go down into the open fields, and find it by the nearest way the horses can take."

"There may be some danger in leaving the cover of the woods before we are near Loches," suggested the friar; but he followed his companion in the descent.

"We are in the dauphin's country," said Pierre; "we are not on land overrun by the English."

Loches's square mass of donjon, and the round points of its château towers, mounted higher in the

afternoon sky. A moist greensward lay under the horses' hoofs in the valley, and the Indre lapped its edges as if they were lips. Pierre was riding idly, wondering how far they must ascend this right bank to find a bridge into Loches, when the friar, who was measuring distance behind, grasped his bridle. Pierre turned, and saw more than rising forest and winding stream-course. He saw a troop of men with glittering lances, still so distant that they seemed cast in one lump, with the particles moving, and the lances mere points of silver. But Pierre had seen men-at-arms ride in his own country. He could not tell if they wore armor. There was no sheen playing over the surface. During all his adventures with Brother Pasquerel they had not once encountered any of those freebooting companies which tormented France. It was not an unusual thing for little companies of French or English to ride far, on the chance of making swift, perilous attacks and bringing away prisoners. But Pierre could not believe that any English knights would venture beyond Orléans through the dauphin's country to Loches. He was for stopping his horse, but Brother Pasquerel dragged the bridle forward. Brother Pasquerel was a black friar, the robe most in favor with Burgundy; but those coming might be neither Burgundians nor Armagnacs, though wearing the badge of both.

"Ride for your life, my son! They are following us."

"But who would hurt a friar, Brother Pasquerel?"

"I have not the desire to know; and neither have you come into France to meet single-handed such a

company as rides yonder. We should not have left the cover of trees until nearer Loches; a monk and an unarmed lad—what can we do but flee?"

Pierre had no dread of the danger, and he spurred ahead, laughing.

"When I tell Jehannette I ran from the first lances I saw, she may flout my coming to the wars as Jacquemine does."

Pierre's horse was the one his father had ridden to Vaucouleurs, large and sturdy for cart-drawing, but of little speed. The friar's was an aged beast lent him by the curé of Domremy. Pilgrims traveled afoot. Brother Pasquerel had taken to horseback on Pierre's account. As they pounded along turf, both refugees knew the pursuit was gaining, and that it would be impossible to reach the gates of Loches. Warmed to the race, Pierre gauged the brimming Indre. It was a narrow stream; of its depth he knew nothing.

"Draw up your robe, Brother Pasquerel," he cried, and dashed into the water. His horse sank to its neck. Pierre knelt on his saddle, with his wooden shoes clasping the raised back, and helped the floundering creature swim by keeping its nose afloat. It shot across, and set fore hoofs on the opposite grassy brim. With a struggle and a shake they were out, and he pulled up Brother Pasquerel's horse by the bit. The Indre was no barrier, but they were now on the same side as Loches. Pierre did not ask himself what a marauding band expected to strip from a friar, whose vow of poverty and manual labor was proclaimed by a habit which could be seen as far as the man, or from a peasant, whose ancestry guaranteed him little. He looked

again, and this time could see the arms of the pursuers. They were after any game, and what yielded little would be the worse used.

The calcareous ridge on which Loches was built extended miles northward, being the ancient barrier of the Indre. In places the rock became as sheer as a wall, with turf upon its roof, which rose terrace above terrace to table-lands; or it receded in tall coves where caverns had been left by fallen masses. As Pierre and Brother Pasquerel rushed by in flight, they saw slab doors in the rock. Chimneys of stone protruded, and steps were carved up the face of the cliff, ascending to other doors and windows. The front end of a village packed securely in a mountain looked down on the passing world. The road here was printed with sheep-tracks. These cliff-dwellers had flocks and hidden folds. Pierre knew nothing about the rock-burrowing peoples of this southern province. He had not a long sight, like Jeanne, to distinguish doors and windows from the break in the forest where he had first seen the cliff; but the strangeness of such habitations did not touch him, for splash and yell in the direction of the Indre testified that the pursuit was nearly up. On his right hand a hole as large as a church widened its gloom. Pierre took to the cavern as he had taken to the river. Pieces of fallen rock lay before it. Under its roof he leaped from his horse, and Brother Pasquerel slipped from the saddle also. The opening had doors. Pierre saw them folded back against the rock —strong slabs, riveted together with bolts of iron. He clapped them shut, and lifting a bar of oak which made him stagger, set it in sockets across both leaves.

Daylight came over the top of this gate, but it was high enough to form a good defense. Lance-butts soon pounded it, and horses trampled outside. A jargon of words proved what mongrel herd demanded toll there. With oaths which made Brother Pasquerel stop his ears and Pierre harken with astonishment, they threatened fire and siege, and chopped the doors with axes. The oak was like rock. Pierre felt secure enough to glance behind him. A blacker gallery penetrated under the hill, and the odor, so well known to him, was that of a sheepfold. Above were jagged rifts, and in one place the earth had parted, showing a thread of sky. Brother Pasquerel sat down on a stone, pushing the cowl off his head. Heat glowed from his mild, dark face. Light above the barrier and through the upper chink sunk by grades of shadow to gloom along the rock floor and in hollows scooped by the winter's action. The horses stood panting with their heads down, steaming from their plunge in the Indre. Pierre stroked the cart-horse's face.

"Poor old fellow! If my father ever hears of this ride, he will forgive thee for falling lame when Jehannette went away. But if they break down the doors and leave me here, do thou fall lame under them every time they bestride thee."

The hard-breathing creature snorted, shaking froth from its lips, and out of the hill gallery came an answering whinny; the cavern was a stable as well as a fold. Though ordinarily quick and resourceful on his own hills, Pierre wondered what he should do hand to hand with these troopers if the barriers gave way. A closed door is a fearful thing when we do not know

the dread that lurks behind it, but much more fearful when it is strained and shaken by recognized foes. Neither he nor Brother Pasquerel understood half that was said outside; for it was the speech of mercenaries gathered from all parts of Europe. As in Paris a butcher had led mobs and ruled the city, so among these roving bands the strongest and bloodiest man became leader, whatever his nationality.

Breathlessly watching the gates with eyes still blinded by daylight, neither of the two inside saw steps that were hewed in the cavern at the left of the entrance. Hearing a woman's voice, Pierre turned, and saw a door at the top of steps; and there was a maid about Jeanne's age leaning out to look at the intruders. If the sky had opened, or the cleft overhead parted wide, it would not have astonished him more. He noticed with instant receptiveness her high pointed head-gear, the like of which was unknown in his country, the tight-fitting robe, and her bright hair shining where no sun glistened on it. Only the fair-haired were considered beautiful in the middle ages. This woman was as white as any saint, and Pierre took off his cap to her.

"Who are you, and why have you come in here?" she demanded; and he thought of Jehannette's voice, though the tone was different.

"We be only Brother Pasquerel and Pierre d'Arc, and robbers outside drove us in."

"Do you know they are threatening our lives and trying to break the house door down?"

"No, demoiselle; we knew nothing of that."

"Can't you hear their threats?"

"The speech of such people is strange to me, demoiselle. I come from the march of Lorraine. Let me into the house, and I will keep the door."

"Why don't you come up, then?" she impatiently cried. "You brought this danger at your heels, and there is n't a man to stand before us."

Pierre mounted in haste, his wooden shoes bumping, and the friar followed. They were close to knocking their heads on the top of the room they entered, where the natural curves of rock stooped low like a scroll-work of clouds, but rose high in gray sweeps over the center of the large place. The door behind them was instantly barred by a peasant woman with a child on one arm. It clung to her neck in terror of the sounds at the front of the house, and she herself was wild-eyed. Straggling locks of hair escaped from her cap.

"Oh, messires," she lamented, "if the good friar can pardon me for saying it, why did you take hiding in our sheepfold, when a little farther on is the cave of Rochecarbon, and his door hath stronger timbers than ours! This comes of my husband not shutting the gates when he leads the sheep out. The demoiselle will be misused or carried off for ransom. Besides, my children are in the field overhead with their father."

"Hush, Marguerite," said the demoiselle; "people cannot choose caves in times like these. Joseph will hide the children."

"He may come to the chimney to speak to me, and the freebooters will drag him down."

She knelt on the hearth and looked up the wide flue, her usual tube of communication with her husband at his labors. The child on her arm strangled with

smoke, and she set it down, stretching her own lean neck over the coals to see if there was a face at the top of the stack. She called the man's name, and, failing to get any reply, sat down on the rock floor and leaned her head against the wall.

Benches were piled against the front door. It looked as thick as the gate of a town, and was fastened by double bars. Above it two square holes were cut in the stone for air, and Pierre mounted the benches to see what his assailants were doing. The active defense fell on him, for Brother Pasquerel knelt in a corner, not permitted to do violence on man. Pierre had come into France weaponless, excepting a sheath-knife at his belt. There was not even an ax on the walls. In northern provinces when peasants were attacked they took to flight, but here they merely shut themselves in. Notwithstanding the noise, he felt the woman's terror was groundless. The boldest riders in the kingdom could not break through stone, and for passing over oak they must use something more powerful than lance-points and hatchets. Free-riders could not cumber themselves with implements for a siege.

Brother Pasquerel quieted the woman and child, for both shrieked when an arrow, shot at random, passed through the opening near their single defender's head, struck the opposite rock, and fell to the floor. Hidden by inner darkness, he could see swarming about, or sitting on horseback and holding bridles below the long slope of rock waste, red-headed Scots, thick-limbed English, Burgundian spearmen, their rich trappings tarnished by a freebooting life, and unknown black-

faced foreigners wearing smocks or blouses stripped from peasants,—such a company as war and famine and the license of the times drew readily together.

A horizontal storm of arrows swept into the sheep-fold or against its oaken barriers. Near the house door was an opening which Pierre took to be a well, full curbed, and with a windlass and chain. While archers wasted a few bolts on the place where their quarry had disappeared, men-at-arms swarmed to the well.

"They no longer throw themselves against the door. Are they in retreat?" the demoiselle inquired.

"No," answered Pierre; "they are taking to the pit of water. One turns the windlass. These are mad fellows to drown themselves."

The demoiselle cried out, and turned toward the inner room.

"It is not a pit of water; it is the mouth of Joseph's granary. They can come through the granary into the fuel-chamber behind this room."

Pierre took no thought what he should do, but found himself in the fuel-chamber at the head of a dismal staircase, and his fist shooting like a battering-ram into the hairy face of an ascending man. As the body bumped down the stones he gathered up a log of wood and clubbed it for a weapon. A knife showed its livid blade in the dark, and he sent down another man. At that moment a pointed battle-ax struck him, and he heaved the log-butt forward at his next assailant. The hatchet dropped, and he took it. How many robbers were descending by chain and windlass to flank the house could not be known. Pierre leaned

over the steps with the wide-edged ax ready, but no more came up.

It was not because houses farther along the village had sent succor, for every door was barred by terrified women, and laborers hid themselves in the fields overhead. The demoiselle mounted the benches, and put her foot on a bar to look out. For some reason known to their own wild minds, the freebooters were drawing off and galloping on toward Loches. They might catch some unwary citizen outside the walls and pluck him before turning to other fields. It was not worth their while to dig or smoke out or take by assault through a cavern a friar and a few peasants. By squads, riding wildly, they trooped along the grass-lined road, and stragglers ran to mount. She saw the venturesome ones whom Pierre had knocked down drawn out of the pit by the men at the windlass, consoling themselves with little sacks of grain which they dragged after them. Bloody and limping, they also took last to horse. The sound of hoofs diminished and died away along the hill toward Loches.

She dropped down, declaring their flight. Pierre changed the ax to his left hand, and grasped that stinging place in his shoulder, which turned him sick. He braced himself by the side of the door, and the demoiselle saw red prints on the rock.

The cave shimmered and went to darkness before his eyes. His first conscious sensation was maiden shame, because his shoulder was stripped naked before the demoiselle, and two thin scarlet lips from arm-pit to nipple poured their thin stream of blood. Somebody supported him on a bench, and it was the friar

who leaned over him oiling and bandaging. Soldiers wounded in battle had money distributed to them, and in one house or another they might seek surgery and tendance, paying each for his own hospital, for there were no military hospitals. Pierre knew none of the customs of war. He thought he smelt the flowers of the lime-tree in his mother's garden, and Jehannette was telling him she saw a vision through the pale yellow bunches. His ears hummed. He was glad to lie down with his head on a cushion and some covering over him.

A long time afterward something touched his lips, and he roused to find it was bread soaked in water and wine. That was the food Jehannette liked best. The demoiselle sat on a stool in front of him, and picked pieces from a cup to feed him. Such kindness brought the blood into his face as if the fever had rushed from his wound, and he took the bites with great humility, keeping his eyes cast down. Joseph, the peasant, and all the children had come in from the fields on the roof, and they gathered behind the demoiselle, admiring everything she did. The oven-hole at the side of the chimney was open. Marguerite held on one hip the loaf she had taken from the oven, and on the other the baby, while she watched also.

The elegant, slight shape of the demoiselle and her small hands were brought so close to Pierre's notice that he lay thinking how much clumsier was the make of a man. Women of his own country had not taught him this. Without speaking a word, but like a mother, she fed him, and he accepted it as his sweet nature accepted every good. He had been born with-

out anxieties. When he lay at night facing the open sky and thinking about his sister, it was the expectancy of youth which stirred in him, not the anticipation of calamity.

Pierre dared scarcely look at the demoiselle, but he contrasted her in his mind with the Widow Davide's Haumette, who was very broad-featured and black-eyed, a maid fierce at dancing, flaming in her red petticoats, and more reluctant to go to mass than Pierre himself. Haumette used to kiss him when they were growing, for she was in love with young manhood. But before Pierre left home she had gone to Goussaincourt to stay with her aunt; for there were stories in Domremy about a Burgundian soldier whom the Widow Davide had led out with practised thumb and finger, and not because of any noise he made. In Greux the villagers held to Burgundy. Pierre had often headed the boys of Domremy against the boys of Greux. They fought on a strip of land between the two villages, and Jehannette cried over him when he went home bloody.

"Now I think you had better go to sleep," said the demoiselle, after his last sop was eaten. Pierre willingly shut his eyes, not to let her or the present moment slip from him, but to hide his weakness, of which he felt ashamed.

Yet when a cow lowed down the chimney and waked him it was late in the night. The fire had sunk to pink ashes. Those blocks of open night over the door were lost in the cave's obliteration. He could hear the unseen family snoring. The bench felt hard, and all the springs of the hills trickled tantalizingly in his memory

while he thirsted. How sweet was the forest-shaded water at Bermont! Did these cave-dwelling people, who turned a pit into a granary, have a drop to cool their tongues with, except what flowed in the Indre? He sat up, wincing at the angry beating of his wound, and groped with one foot for his wooden shoes, which the friar had drawn off, intending to unbar the door and go down to the river. But Brother Pasquerel rose from the darkness and put a jug of water to his mouth. The jerking stream descended his throat until it was forcibly taken away. Then he began to shiver. His nurse raked open the ashes, and brought wood from the fuel-room, and drew the bench to the hearth.

They both sat upon it, the old man holding the young one half reclining against his shoulder for support and heat.

"Where is the demoiselle?" inquired Pierre, in a whisper, loath to have her in that room with so many sleeping peasants, yet alarmed at losing sight of her.

"The man and his wife took her on her horse to Loches before nightfall."

"Why did you let them put her to such risks?"

"She herself commanded it, and the thing was very safely done."

"Who is she, Brother Pasquerel?"

"I know nothing of her, except that she is lately come from Scotland, and this woman asleep in bed was once her mother's servant."

"She is the whitest-favored maid I ever saw," said Pierre.

"White or black, no woman hath favor of God who

doth carry that cursed horn called the hennin perched on her head."

"Was that a hennin, Brother Pasquerel?"

"A hennin it was; and when I behold one with my own eyes I cannot marvel that a friar has risen up to preach against the evil thing in Paris."

Pierre had lost too much blood to be enlisted in the crusade against hennins. In the flickering room behind the friar and him the peasant's entire family were stretched in one bed, which extended a dozen feet beside the wall. There were green mineral stains up the throat of the chimney, which tongues of flame showed forth. Wind rumbled overhead. This was a strange shelter, yet Pierre felt better housed than he had been since leaving Domremy. He knew, whatever lay before him, he would be homesick for the cave in time to come. He did not want to leave it, and said to himself it must have been the fight that so bound him; for he did love that strip of land between Greux and Domremy on account of the honest giving and taking of blows there. "I have got my first wound in this house," reflected Pierre.

"Have you seen the horses?" he inquired reluctantly.

"Yes, and they are well fed and stabled. These people have a little grain to sell. The valley of the Indre is not a desert like the Solange."

"It will be best for you to leave me here and push up the valley of the Indre toward Tours," suggested Pierre. "As for me, I must keep my face set direct toward Jehannette. I cannot carry this wound out of my way."

"Neither will I leave you, nor will you leave me," overruled Brother Pasquerel. "Since it seems best to push on your way, we will go together. Can you ride to-morrow?"

"As well to-morrow as next day."

"But you are weak from the blood-letting, and the wound will be sore."

"A wound that hath cut through no bones will soon heal; and my mother says miracles are wrought on Jehannette's flesh and mine: no sore stays."

"We will, then, make what speed we can toward Chinon," said the friar; "and shorten the way by putting these hills behind our backs without going into Loches."

It was easy to find a path through the ridge where the land dipped low, but nothing could shorten the day's journey for Pierre. They started at daybreak, with a sack of bread and a bottle of wine behind the saddle of each. Pierre's face was leaden in color. At noon the friar dressed his wound in fresh oil and bands of serge. The rough cloth hurt him. He was glad the air blew cool, for the hot blood bit his shoulder all day, and oftener than they found springs he found a mighty thirst to quench.

Man is such a little creature creeping so near the ground in the largeness of hills and woods and valleys, and his vision diminishes so soon to the vanishing-point, no wonder he loses his way. But the friar steered their course as nearly westward as he could by such landmarks as he had gathered from the untraveled cave-dwellers. Clouds came up behind the ground. The sky seemed to be driving and hurrying overhead,

marshaling its vapors out of space, and sifting them from shape to shape to hurl along a low level; yet if one did not look up, it was nothing but the ordinary shadow of cloudy weather. Late in the afternoon a yellow storm appeared in the west, sulphurous and windy. It threatened much, but at first the rain which met the travelers was a fine mist in the face, so imperceptible that neither said, "It rains." Then long curtains hanging far down the sky and pendulous at the horizon swept upon them, beating fiercely. Water ran down their bodies and dripped from their stirrups. Pierre felt his wound washed through jacket and body-garment and bandages. When the two were wettest the sun broke out, drenching the open land with prismatic radiance, and triple rainbows arched behind them. Their direct route had taken them past few inhabited spots, and these were remote to right or left. Brother Pasquerel began to turn his cowled face anxiously toward Pierre, for whom he desired night shelter. Wet grass and swarming vapors, and the head on the saddle under some bush, would be bad lodging for a wounded man.

The sun went down, shining through a single tree, and seeming to cut it in two with fire. They rode on, making haste over unbroken land. Though spontaneous growths were rank all about their horses' feet, the soil was so white that it showed pallid in far-stretching distances, and kept daylight lingering upon it as marble might have done.

In front of the riders appeared a figure with hands and face like an old peasant, almost covered by the pannier heaped high with lucerne which he carried on

his back. He stood still. The fodder revealed a tender greenness through the dusk.

"We will ask that old man for lodging," suggested the friar.

"But he carries a miraculous load," said Pierre; "there is no such green food for cattle at this time of the year."

He changed before them, as they rode closer, into a dwarfed tree, strangely marked on the stem, its bunched top of switches thick set with tender leaves. But behind this poor apparition and beyond a fringe of trees, they saw for the first time something like a needle-point against the sky, and guessed it to be the spire of a church. Wherever there were churches there were men; or if this proved to be a broken-down sanctuary,—and there were many such in the kingdom,—the travelers might find some gable or crypt still in condition to give shelter.

Pierre felt indifferent to the landscape. He sickened with a growing faintness, and one spot of the dark world was the same as another. He wanted to lie down in the wet sward, and the friar had prevented it an indefinite time when they stopped close by a buttressed wall. Pierre braced himself with one hand on the moss of a down-sloping window-sill. It was a shame to leave a friar to tie the horses; but when he had slid to the ground Brother Pasquerel helped him past buttresses and around a corner. A large portal let them directly into a white church, of which night seemed unable to take complete possession.

Pierre lay down by himself on one of the rough, movable benches near the door. The massive stone

font supported on a low pillar was near his head, and he stretched out his right hand for holy water, crossing himself with an exhausted effort. A little light shone out of one transept, but the body of the church was dim. He could see, however, the arms of some noble family painted on the wall opposite him, and also blots of green damp high up near the arches. Through tall, leaded windows the outside world seemed to affect this isolated church. Pierre could imagine the brightness of a sunny afternoon here. Wind rolled in the vault above with a swell like the incoming ocean tide; but to him, who had never heard that sound, it was the voice of the woods over Domremy. If Jehannette had sat on the bench beside him, or kneeled on the lower bench to which it was attached at the foot, he could scarcely have felt her nearer. Perhaps she had rested in this church; some part of her remained there. And Pierre noticed by shadows made in the whiteness of the stones what hollows were worn along the center of the floor. Generations of lads' feet, in wooden shoes like his, had stumped by that path to confession or prayer. They and their sisters came here every Sunday. As his eyes grew used to the inclosure, and he rested from the pain of motion, the cold, high altar at the end of the church and the light in the transept were both forgotten. He saw a small altar diagonally opposite him, near the angle of the transept, standing dragged out from the wall as if its displacement were temporary. On a pedestal over the altar, so high that it caught the last glimmers of light through stone-framed glass above the portal, was a painted image as antique and simple

as the Virgin at Bermont, a gilded, round-eyed St. Catherine holding a book, and having the broken wheel of her martyrdom leaning against her. The royal maid of Egypt wore a crown, and smiled insipidly. But under the figure was a dark gap left by the removal of two stones from the wall. The place was about breast-high to Pierre.

The unstopped hole, left perhaps by workmen because daylight failed, proclaimed that man was a near neighbor of this church. And presently he heard strange voices talking with the friar outside the door.

"The houses from which you come, are they not the village of Fierbois?" inquired the friar.

"That is the village of Fierbois," was answered.

"We have, then, reached St. Katherine de Fierbois."

"This is the church of St. Katherine. Is my brother a pilgrim to the venerable shrine?"

"Only a passer-by, for I return from a winter's retreat in the mountains of the Vosges. A young man with me is lying wounded in the church; we met free-riders near Loches. Can we have shelter with you?"

"Assuredly," answered the other; then a louder voice spoke up:

"This monk is of the convent in Tours. I know him by his habit, though the brethren have little to do with men of my craft."

"Are you from Tours?" inquired the priest, holding the door open for Brother Pasquerel to enter. "We have strange news from Tours."

"The armorer has spoken the truth; I am a brother

of the convent of our order there. What news have you from Tours?"

The priest forgot the wounded man as he shut the last yellowness of daylight out, and a sudden accession of night entered the church with the three. A rustic acolyte came from the transept where the light burned, and set flame to the tips of two candles on the altar of St. Katherine. These white points in a hollow of gloom surrounded by white walls made visible a small space where peasants would kneel for evening prayers, and showed the eagerness of two of the three figures now occupying that space. Their lower parts were in a stratum of dimness, churchmen's cassocks and armorer's legs being lost beneath the starlike height of the candles. The priest pointed to the hollow behind the altar. His low voice made echoes in remote corners.

"There, this day, a miraculous sword was found. We are leaving the altar removed from its place and the stones yet on the floor, that people may see where the sword was embedded. There it has lain, tradition saith, since Charles Martel drove the heathen back from Tours."

"Where is it now?" inquired Brother Pasquerel; and the waiting acolyte, obeying a sign from the priest, went into the transept, and returned with a slim, large-handled blade. It lay upon cloth of gold, which covered his hands, and the three heads bent over it.

"There be no such swords as this in the world today," said the armorer. "That blade is no longer forged. I wish I knew the man who made it; I would

give him plenty of employment. Mark you, here are five crosses below the handle, just as the maid said there would be."

"He speaks of the maid who sent him here to take this sword from the wall," explained the priest. "It has been guarded on the altar of our Lady while a suitable scabbard was made. When we took it from the hollow it was crusted with rust; but that fell away as a scale, and left it shining as you see."

"What maid sent for it?" inquired Brother Pasquerel; and Pierre listened, feeling his breath come and go like the swell and ebb up in the arches.

"She is called Jeanne the pucelle," answered the armorer. "All Tours is astir about her, and an army is gathering to march with her to Orléans."

"It is the maid who passed St. Katherine de Fierbois on her way to the king, and heard three masses in this church," answered the priest. "That is the news we have from Tours—a maid is to lead the armies of France. And she had miraculous knowledge where to find the sword of Fierbois; for we might have leveled the walls in the search, but for her exact message. No living person knew where that sword was buried."

"I had my orders from the king to make her a complete suit of mail and furnish her in all needful arms," declared the armorer; "but no sword would do except this. 'You will find it in the wall,' saith she, 'under the feet of the statue above the altar at the angle of the transept.' And I thought to have my journey for my pains, for she hath a soft, innocent face. But, mark you, her unlettered tongue could

answer better than the great doctors at Poitiers could propound. They say it was a fine sight to see her sitting alone before so many, and bearing their strait examination with such sense and patience. The doctors have sent abroad a letter to all parts of France, commending her employment by the king; and during my whole life my trade hath never been so brisk as she hath made it within a week."

"Have you not heard of this maid among the hills of the Vosges?" inquired the priest.

"Yes; I have heard of her. We were on her track to Chinon or Poitiers, not knowing she was already in Tours. It is her brother who sits there wounded beside the holy-water font."

VII

BERTRAND DE POULENGY grasped the handle of a chain which hung beside the closed gates of the Augustine convent to ring for admission, when one gate-leaf opened, and Pierre d'Arc came out. Made resplendent by the dauphin as one of the household of the pucelle, in hose and tunic of new cloth, burnished cuirass, with hat and plume, with leather shoes so light that his feet seemed winged, with hatchet in girdle and sword hung at his side, Pierre's handsome figure was conspicuous on the street. The narrow Rue des Halles had received its fullness of morning light, and every round small stone of the paving shone warm and dry. There was a bright grayness about Tours even in cloudy weather, but when the sun shone out it was a dazzling city full of joyful stir.

"Eh! I was about to demand you of the friars," said Bertrand; "everything is so forward that the troops will move to-morrow instead of next day. The pucelle is about to ride out and review them. The horses are at the door, and officers are waiting to escort her. Make haste, sluggard! You fare too soft with the churchmen.'

"I have some excuse in this half-healed cut that I still carry; but I stopped also to confession this morning," said Pierre. "Since Brother Pasquerel has been appointed my sister's confessor—and glad I am it is that good man one can love instead of some others I have seen in this convent—he has fixed his eyes on me in a way I cannot bear. It does go against me to be righteous, Bertrand. I cannot stand up to it. How do you stand it yourself?"

"I ought to be a friar," responded Bertrand, with irony; "a monastic life would bring out virtues that are now hid in me."

Pierre rested his arm on his friend's shoulder as they walked. "You are not the man you were, lad; your cheek has thinned and your eye has grown deep. Sometimes I have qualms myself in this strange country. If it were not for the fighting ahead, I could wish we were all children again, watching the cattle hid in the island."

"It is the new squire that saps my cheek. By St. Martin! I am tired of these multitudes of men. At Chinon we must have a page—one of these fellows with a quill behind his ear, but quick with his sword and his cursed tongue—you have seen the varlet; and now we have the equipage of a noble added—two heralds, two servants, a steward, a confessor, and another squire. The heralds, the servants, the steward, and the confessor I am, by prayer and fasting, able to embrace," said Bertrand, speaking with bitter deliberation; "but damn the other squire!"

Pierre turned his laughing gray eyes affectionately on his friend's bunch of light hair. Bertrand's hair

jutted heavily forward, breaking into a curled mass at the front. From crown to nape he was shorter than from forehead to chin. It was the habit of his hat to creep backward, uplifting its edge like a halo.

"Lad, I do love thee, and I invoke the saints that my sister may not reform thee as well as the troops. Concerning the following they give her, she has no desire for it. The dauphin does it to show her honor, Brother Pasquerel tells me. It is the customary suite of a person of dignity in arms. Soldiers and mercenaries might hold her in slight regard if she had less."

"From a good knight like De Metz of Novelopont I can take commands," pursued Bertrand; "but this squire, who is put over me because he is older, he is my chief trouble; I have no other."

Pierre tightened his arm on Bertrand. They were not the only pair moving linked in a half-embrace. Tours was alive with roaring fellows, even at that morning hour inviting everybody to go where drinking was good, for pure joy that the troops were to march so soon. They walked in the center of the paved street, giving way to companies of horsemen, who forced them often to the doors of overhanging house-fronts. Shouts and the clink of armor and the rattle of bits filled the town. From the direction of the river-wall came that tinkle of hammers on metal which told that all the armorers of Tours were working all hours of the day until late spring twilight, and the credit of Charles of France among their craft was unlimited. The miraculous maid was now security enough for her sovereign. She had all the strength of heaven behind her. Men ran out of their shops,

and women leaned out of their windows, to see her ride by in steel armor so burnished that it was as white as light, her spirited horse, which had been given her by one of the nobles that now flocked to court, controlled by a skilled hand. Every day she practised arms and tilted at quintain, a figure so balanced that it must be struck fairly or overthrow the rider. And there was also money to pay now for the equipment of an army. Troops were gathering at Blois, the next important town between Tours and Orléans. Yolande of Sicily had found the open hand of Jaeques Cœur of Bourges more generous than ever on account of the maid's fame.

At the western end of the street stood St. Martin's great church, flanked on one corner by a square gray pile called the tower of Charlemagne. Its flying buttresses framed segments of a gauzy sky. Bertrand and Pierre threaded their way around its side and beyond the western portal. Within sight was the town house of Jehan Dupuy, the seignior of Roche-Saint-Quentin,[1] whose wife had guardianship of the maid in Tours. The seignior of Roche-Saint-Quentin was Queen Yolande's man of affairs. His wife had been the playmate and friend of Marie of Anjou. The dauphin thought of no better place for his approved agent while the troops were gathering than the house of this faithful vassal.

Horses and varlets waited about the large portal. Before ascending the stairs to the upper room where Jeanne received people who came to see her, Pierre had formed what he wished to say to his friend. He

[1] M. Henri Destréguil, Tours.

had a large unconsciousness of self. Two or three days had accustomed him to military dress. His good will extended to all the human race, and the curious stare of the waiting servants passed over him without his feeling it. He bent his head closer to the other's ear; his dark-lashed eyes were serious.

"Bertrand, if you had not been with Jehannette when she left Vaucouleurs, nothing could have kept me from following her directly. I did not know the other men; but I knew you, and it made my mind quite easy. Let the dauphin put an army of squires, pages, and servants about her; who can ever be trusted as you are?"

The shorter man looked up at Pierre, his face flushing almost to tears, and whitening instantly until the skin looked drawn on his features.

"My spirit is breaking, Pierrelo. It grows worse and worse with me. I 'm glad you 've come to put some manhood into me again. When we were in Poitiers, and people yet doubted her, and she had to sit and answer all kinds of puzzling questions put by learned men, and there was a chance of her being turned back from the dauphin's service, I thought my heart would break if they refused her; but now that she has been accepted, and everybody is crowding after the pucelle, I cannot endure that. Take me to some convenient place, and knock me on the head with your ax, Pierrelo. I am a poor creature."

"You are the best fellow I ever knew," declared Pierre; "and when we have something to do besides waiting in lodgings for the march upon Orléans, it will be better with you."

They entered with the freedom of attendants the large upper chamber where Jeanne was busy with officers, and the lady of Roche-Saint-Quentin sat by with her embroidery. Pierre's figure fell into the attitude of waiting. He folded his arms, and watched his sister's back and the short hair flying above her tunic. He had noticed that her language was softened, but there was change in her which life among the courtly and learned could not make in a few weeks. She was now the strangely commissioned virgin of war, whose business was larger than he could yet comprehend. Yet when he had come into Tours, sick and sore, beside Brother Pasquerel, and met her riding with the young Duke d'Alençon on a prancing horse which that nobleman had given her, shining in her burnished armor through the midst of a company like a pageant, she cried to her brother, "Oh, Pierrelo!" and spurred up close to throw her mailed arms around his neck. She was his same dear maid, but with every motion of this new spirit showing in her face. Pierre had no traffic with heaven himself, except in the heartiest and most animal way, and he felt astounded by the solid results of visions. For he had expected, at the best, little more than permission to march on foot with his sister to Orléans, and indulgence to break the head of any man who insulted a maid-at-arms; but he found her the autocrat of an army, dictating with the power of the church to old soldiers.

One of the two with whom she conferred was a courtier, a tall, thin-nosed man, who said little, but examined her with constant scrutiny. He leaned against the wall, holding his plumed cap at his side, and

crossing his feet, with one long shoe resting on its point. It was his friend who talked—a short and bristling man, whose person seemed compressed lengthwise to enormous strength. This was Étienne de Vignolles, who always spoke of himself as La Hire, and never claimed his particular body and soul with the pronoun I. The two men were inseparable. In all their experience of war, it was the first time they had been moved by the thrill of a young voice declaring in their ears:

"We must clear the camps of sin. If we are to be terrible to the enemy, it must be through religion. Can God go before an army that continually blasphemes his name? When I rode among the troops yesterday, and forbade their cursing, they said, 'If Messire La Hire will stop it, we will stop it also.'"

"The varlets felt safe in promising that," remarked La Hire, winking aside at his tall friend. "La Hire hath the best name in France for a plump oath that fills the mouth from jowl to jowl and tongue to roof; and it doth taste as sweet as meat, pucelle."

"La Hire would burst if he could not swear," said the tall knight.

"Yea; Poton knows La Hire well. Reform Poton de Xantrailles. He is a mannerly man, and would repay the labor it cost to make him a Christian."

"I often curse the bad habits I learn of La Hire," said the tall knight.

"But he is a bride to me," declared La Hire. "La Hire would be glad to curse for Poton and himself both, and save Poton the sin."

"You must not swear." Jeanne's voice was silver, but it went through hearers like iron.

"Oh, pucelle, do let La Hire swear! It is impossible—" the stout warrior threw his hands from side to side. "La Hire was born swearing, as other babes were born squalling, and he must swear."

"You can say 'En nom Dé,'" suggested Jeanne, "which is the same as a prayer in my country."

"Oh, if La Hire began with the name of God, he would never stop while there was a saint left in the calendar. Let him swear, pucelle. He can jarnedieu an Englishman speechless, though with their poor rough language the English do swear as well as they can."

"No; you shall not have leave even to jarnedieu in the army of God. If swear you must, swear by this rod I hold in my hand. No harm can come of swearing by a baton carried by a maid."

"Swear by nothing but a stick when heaven is full of good, mouth-filling stuff! Oh, pucelle!" groaned the culprit. "La Hire would not lay a stick in thy way, but thou hast put one in his. Oh, by my baton!"

He turned like a bull in distress toward the two young men, grinning in wrinkles of sun-hardened flesh; and Jeanne turned also, laughing, but with a rainbow laugh made partly of tears. The entreaty swimming in her eyes, and the swelling of her innocent throat, brought La Hire to the baton as no fanatic command could have done. In his heart he did revere her as a saintly child. She moved before the troops, a mysterious presence lent for a purpose. There was at that time such brutal license in the camps of Europe as gentler races are now incapable of. "Men-at-arms," says a chronicler, "resembled mercenaries badly paid

by the king. Rape, incendiarism, assassination, cost them little; blasphemy cost them nothing." Yet such men had their adorations. The habits of the pucelle's life were talked of among them. She would not receive or have speech with anybody after sunset, and a woman always slept in the same chamber with her. The lady of Roche-Saint-Quentin remained beside her, except when she rode out to practise horsemanship in the sight of the troops.

Jeanne's armor lay piled ready upon a table, where the sun struck it, making bosses of fire, and turning the many diminishing plates of the fingers into gauntlets of sparkles. She put herself directly in the hands of her squire to be armed, but Bertrand had not taken up a piece when she remembered to summon the men after her through a door at the end of the room. It led into one of the carved cabinets of that period, a narrow place, with one entire side of leaded glass, containing a long bench or table. On this was stretched a banner of the white linen then so uncommon in France that garments of it were considered treasures of royalty. On the surface lying uppermost was painted a figure like our Lord's, seated on a rainbow, with clouds underfoot, holding the globe in his hands. The name "Jhesus" was emblazoned in letters of gold. Jeanne lifted the banner in both hands and displayed the other side, where two kneeling angels each offered the Virgin a lily. Golden fleurs-de-lis sprinkled the white ground, and the name "Maria" shone there. It was to be supported half its length by a rod along the top fitted into a spear.

"Here is my standard," said Jeanne; "it has been

painted exactly as it was commanded. And the daughter of Messire Paure,[1] the painter, has helped me with the needlework."

De Xantrailles examined the work with his mocking courtier's smile, and said to her:

"It is a pity to lose hands from the tapestry that can set stitches like these."

"There are enough women left in France to sew and spin," answered Jeanne, seriously. "Though I thank God my mother taught me to handle needle and distaff as well as any maid in our valley."

La Hire took between finger and thumb the sacred fringe edging the banner, which Bertrand looked at without touching; but Pierre's eyes went past it to a maid sitting at the end of the room stitching a white pennon. She was the demoiselle he had seen in the cave house at Loches.

Pierre was not bold enough to claim her notice, and she sat without lifting a glance from her needlework, small hairs above her ears stirring in the air which came through an open pane. Hid like something precious in this inner room, she held herself aloof from all the men alike; but when Jeanne approached her, the pair talked eagerly together in familiar tenderness that warmed Pierre's imagination. He was able to picture to himself their hours of stitching and talking in this nest of carved wood and glass overlooking an old garden, while the lady of Roche-Saint-Quentin sat guarding them in the outer room. How a painter who had accepted from the dauphin twenty-five livres

[1] "Her standard was executed after her instructions by a Scotch painter, James Power, resident in Tours."—MARIUS SEPT.

tournois for painting this standard could be the father of a demoiselle puzzled Jeanne's brother less than it would have puzzled a courtier. For Pierre neither poverty nor rank existed. Enough to eat and to wear, hills, valleys, and cattle for a possession, and vineyards as well, had been the rule of his life. There was no superior to bow to except the curé, and one bowed to the curé for religion's sake only. The divine right of kings was then part of every man's creed, and if the dauphin had crossed his path, he would have dropped to his knees before that earthly deity; but Pierre knew his sovereign only by hearsay.

"This is Pierrelo," said Jeanne, showing him to her friend; "he is almost cured of the wound he got in Loches."

It seemed to Pierre like a story of fairy work that he should meet this demoiselle in Tours, and it gave him a sense of greater things to come; for towns even in the same kingdom were then as remote from one another as continents now are. He thought about her all that day, and the few words she spoke to him as if she had forgotten feeding him bread and watered wine at Loches. The Scots were a cold people; but when he took opportunity to ask his sister more about her, riding through the camp, he found that the Scot's daughter was also French.

The Loire, the longest river in France, was then Charles's northern boundary, and Tours is on the south bank. The troops were to march along the north shore and join the main army at Blois. They had camped in the vineyard country, a good league on their way. Provisions and cattle, which Touraine was

sending for the revictualing of Orléans, streamed all day along the road leading to camp; for the convoy was to move next daybreak.

Pierre loved the Loire better than any other sight in Tours. It was a stream of promise coming down from Orléans, the city of battle. The full volume of spring rolled in its bed. Scarcely a shallow was left in the wide expanse, though no river inclined more to shy around rocks, or pay its transparent silver pieces over shelves of gravel. There were meadows within its ancient barriers. An embankment along its northern shore from Blois past Tours to Angers had existed since Carlovingian times, and the mighty river was further girdled in by a range of tower-like cliffs, where house-doors, seen from the city, showed as dark rabbit-holes; for in this calcareous rock people had burrowed when the Romans entered Gaul.

Pierre galloped back from the camp toward Tours about sunset, having been left by the pucelle to bring her a last word from the troops before the gates closed. The Loire was then a pink-and-yellow glory at its western disappearance. Shifting islands in the channel, gigantic compared with the channel of the Meuse, looked warm in the dispersing glow. Women in the cave houses yet appeared at their open doors, and the heads of peasants in the fields on the cliff-top sometimes showed against the sky. Nearly all the convoy had reached its destination for the night, though a few belated carts were yet to be seen, and the last straggling men were hastening on foot from Tours. As cliffs darkened and river dimmed, the cave houses closed, and became by means of their air-holes

a long constellation of little stars. Ahead of him, Pierre saw two men seizing a woman—a small creature carrying a basket on her arm, and wearing a peasant's cloak and petticoat and shoes, and couvrechef over her head. She screamed when the men made their onset, but struggled against them without a word, a solitary creature between inhabited bluffs and lonesome river. Pierre spurred at them in such rage that he felt he should split them to the breastbone. Something about the timid figure reminded him of Mengette. But they dropped her cloak and took to their heels in dismay, for men of the camp already began to know him.

"It is the brother of the pucelle!"

He wheeled to chase them, but thought better of it, and reined in his horse and leaped off. The woman had picked up her cloak. She threw it over her tumbled bright hair and head-cover, shuddering away from Pierre's side, while he had not a word to say, for the fading sky showed him that she was the demoiselle Power. At that moment she was the safest woman in Touraine.

The demoiselle tried to laugh, her under lip still quivering. Pierre saw how young she was. The hennin and feminine hardy-coat had given her dignity which she lacked in peasant clothes. These garments brought her close to him, as if there had been old acquaintance. His passion for this half-foreigner began then, with the Loire and the twinkling cliffs and evening sky as its witnesses.

"I am much beholden to the brother of the pucelle," she said when she could command her breath.

"Let me lift you to the saddle," Pierre urged; "there be other varlets on the road drunker than the last."

"No; they will note me more on the saddle than on the ground."

"But I will walk beside the horse's head, demoiselle."

"In that case they will pelt me with words worse than stones."

"En nom Dé, demoiselle, what shall I do?"

"The road was never so bad before, and I was never so late. If you can come with me to St. Martin's well, and then let me walk near the horse while you ride back to Tours, I shall be safe."

"Let you walk while I ride? I cannot."

"Then I shall have to beg some woman in one of these cave houses to take me in until morning, as I had already thought of doing, for the gates of Tours will be closed; but to-morrow I may meet other varlets on the road, and you will be gone with the troops."

Pierre felt the fact shock through him—he would be gone with the troops.

"I will do your bidding, demoiselle."

"Then let us make haste to St. Martin's fountain."

The necessity of human company kept her not far before him as they turned their backs on fields and banks of sand which made the ancient beach of the Loire. Down a lane burrowing along the cliff-side, with trees and rocks betwixt it and the highway, Pierre and his horse followed the demoiselle. She came to an oblong of darkness in the mountain base, which could be entered by descending many rude steps.

Pierre tied his horse, and descended the steps with her. She took out a key and unlocked a gate at the bottom. There was a cold pavement of rock under their feet.

When she had unlocked the gate, some perception of her own unusual conduct made her turn upon him.

"Do not enter here with me."

"I thought you wished me to enter with you, demoiselle."

Bareheaded, Pierre ascended the steps to wait; but she called him, a child's fear of the dark in her voice.

"I cannot go in there with you, and it is so dreadful to go into the dark alone."

"Let me go in for you, while you remain outside."

"No; you do not know the place, and you would walk headlong into the well. It is sheer rock, and though the pebbled bottom be white as milk and the water like crystal, it would close in darkness over your head."

"Then it is no safe place for a young maid to venture after nightfall."

"This is the first time I have so ventured. I have been all the afternoon hiding from noisy villains along the road from Tours. The woman who keeps the key of this gate, and opens to pilgrims, had gone up to labor in the fields over the houses, and I was obliged to follow her."

"Why did she not come with you?"

"I do not pay her. She is kind to let me have the key, and risk its lying under a stone after I have again locked the gate."

The demoiselle took her basket from her arm and

gave it to Pierre to hold. He had not meddled with it before, and he hardly allowed himself to see what it contained. She took out four wine-flasks, all fastened by their necks to a long loop of cord, and bade him set the pannier on a step. Above them in the zenith was yellow twilight, deepening its shadows to the dusk rocks about them. Her eyes, he saw, being near them, were black; her skin had a white pallor as she faced him.

"I do not know how to govern myself; my mother is dead. On one side is my mother's noble family, who are not dear to me; on the other side is my father, who loves me. When we were in Scotland we lived simply like peasants, but when we come back to France everything I did there seems wrong. It is very puzzling. Did you ever try to obey two laws of conduct?"

Pierre shook his head. "One law of conduct hath been more than I could master, demoiselle."

"Yet I think," she reflected, "that my father and my grandmother and aunt De Beuil would agree in this matter, that the pucelle's brother might lay hold on my hand to keep me from falling into the holy well of St. Martin."

"They would certainly be agreed," affirmed Pierre.

She relaxed, and drew a long breath of relief.

"We must therefore enter the cavern together. Please hold my hand."

In that primal blank of darkness safety became the first human instinct. She slid her feet obliquely forward, holding his fingers with her left hand. Pierre had taken off his mailed glove. He felt with joy her

reliant clutch as the small nails set themselves into his flesh. The demoiselle paused.

"I am glad you came in here with me," she breathed, and her low voice woke sounds in the blackness. "Pilgrims have walked on this cold stone barefoot to holy St. Martin's well; but even at midday, when the place is only a chamber of gloom, I dread it. The peasants say there are seven martyrs, who all perished in one day, lying far back in this cave. They call that portion the Grotto of Seven Sleepers. But I am afraid of hearing bones rattle."

She recoiled, and Pierre steadied her with both hands.

"I was standing on the brink."

"Let me draw the water," he urged; "I see the fountain."

He was answered by the splash of the bottles, which she had already lowered. The jerking gurgle of their drinking necks could be heard until they sank, and all the time the cavern was dawning to sight, from its sky of rock to the mouth of the fountain beside the left wall. Beyond there was nothing but black negation, a huge place choked as with thick substance of night.

"They are full," said the demoiselle, bringing her dripping bottles to hand. "Will you taste of St. Martin's well?"

"I will drink after you."

She touched a bottle to her lips, and gave it to him. "Make haste! It is almost night, and the gates of Tours will be closed; but you will be blessed for making this pilgrimage and drinking in the cave."

"I am blessed already," said Pierre. "In my whole

life I shall never again drink such water. If we came here every day it might make a good Christian of me."

She stopped the bottles, and put them in her pannier, and locked the gate, hiding the key under a stone by the top step. Pierre was for carrying the pannier, but she commanded him:

"Mount, and leave the pannier to me. It is my safeguard. Ride a few steps behind me. I shall be safe if you ride near me through the city gates. They will be closed, and I may have trouble there."

"It is a long walk."

"The journey is nothing to me. I come twice a week, because my father is not able to make the pilgrimage, and he requires the water for a malady of the stomach."

"Does he send you thus?"

"He does not send me at all. He thinks I pay one of these peasants to carry it to him; but we are too poor, and it is too hard for my father to get money for me to give it foolishly to peasants when I can come here myself. I have been here four or five times, and there was never danger for a woman in these clothes until the troops began to gather. My old nurse in Loches gave my father these shoes and petticoat, and I often put them on when he wished to make pictures of peasants, and so thought of wearing them to this fountain. I never had anything to wear in my life," confided the demoiselle, "except what belonged to my mother; and grandeur is not as fit for me as these things of Marguerite's."

In the wide dusk and among broken rocks her small figure looked very small, and her miniature face too

fine for lowly carriage along the flinty road. Pierre felt that he could not mount, but she set off briskly. He noticed her sabots did not squeak as they would have done under the tread of a heavy peasant. The right one flew off, and skated along the indistinct track. He ran, and brought it to her. The demoiselle stood on one foot like a bird. She stepped into it as he placed it before her, wriggling a small inmate in a large house. "The wool is out of the toe, but do not search for it. I am so late already my father will be terrified.

"Do not speak to me," she added, looking back from the highway; "if I need you I will call."

Pierre's horse was one of mettle, such as Charles had provided for all the pucelle's train. He had sold the cart-horse in Tours, and had the pieces of money sewed up in a fragment of cloth in a pouch which hung from his belt, for there might be a chance of returning it to his father. The horse strained eagerly to dash forward. He held it curveting, while the small figure ahead of him, hiding terror under darkness, flew along the level way, or dipped into hollows, or turned spurs of the hill. In all his shepherd life he had never driven to the fold so sweet a lamb. His face burned with the shame of sitting a saddle while she waded the night on a peasant's footing. The Loire, gathering all the light that remained, lay, a steel-smooth sheet, where the sun would have shown its million variations of surface. In the distance across its channel twinkled Tours, St. Martin's great basilica and towers standing up against the void.

He did not know she was running back until his

heart gave a great plunge with the horse. She called him by the name she had heard his sister call him:

"Pierrelo!"

Afterward, in hand-to-hand fights, in ditches, while scaling walls, Pierre remembered her voice calling to him through the night, and it stirred him to the utmost. He was on the ground and answering her before she reached him.

"There is something in the road that struggles and groans. Perhaps a man has been wounded, and left to die."

"Stay here until I go forward and see what it is."

She lingered close at his elbow. He could hear the terrified beating of a maid's pulses. "Oh, if I were home with my father! I am ashamed," she breathed.

Pierre jerked down the rearing horse. Any man who lay dying in the road deserved to die for shocking her with the fact that she was out of her place. But the object of which the horse was so afraid was nothing but a fallen ox.

"Poor fellow!" said Pierre; "he is doubtless only left until his master brings help."

After that they met two or three horsemen, and so entered the long bridge which spanned the Loire to the walls of Tours. It was covered, like many of the bridges of that period, and threatened them, an endless tunnel of darkness starred by a few torches burning in sockets at long intervals. Pierre put his arm through the bridle, and walked close behind the demoiselle. When night was heaviest upon them she felt his grasp helping her with the basket, this visible

protection being removed whenever they reached the dazzle of one of the smoky torches. Such places were the favorite haunts of cutthroats. But the bridge was fortunately cleared by the many passers who had stirred its dust that day, and sentinels at the city gates let in a belated peasant and the brother of the pucelle without question.

Candles shone through leaded panes, and a moving lantern or two could be seen, but the city had lost its day brightness.

"Good-by," said the demoiselle, in the open space to which the street here expanded; "I have but a step to go beyond St. Julien's church." Pierre, leading his horse, still walked behind her.

Her swift sabots drew him in silence past the sunken portal of St. Julien, and through a street which turned to the left beyond it. Here houses seemed to huddle against them as they passed, and windows were barred. It was dark and winding. They came to a house-front overhanging the street, and Pierre could see against blacker walls the head and shoulders of a man thrust past an open sash, listening to the noise they made upon the stones below.

"Madeleine?" the man spoke, his voice betraying all he had suffered; and the demoiselle answered joyfully, "Yes, father."

"Now he has found who carries the water from St. Martin's well," she said with regret. They stood under the overhanging front, and she felt in her basket for a key. Pierre took from his pouch the money the plow-horse had brought, and as she sought the lock he hid it in her pannier.

"Your father will never let you go to that fountain again," said Pierre, with a breath of relief.

"No; he will sit with his hands in his hair, as he did when my grandmother's people were obliged to journey back with me from Loches. But those who will not countenance him shall not have me."

"You love your father."

"As I love none other, except the pucelle. She chose him to paint her standard. The cruel people of the cathedral would not accept his picture; but she chose him when she might have had another painter. For that I love her."

The door opened from within, and, dark as the place was, Pierre could see the womanish, nervous hands which seized a belated daughter. He turned with the horse, and drew away from touching more closely the sacred family life existing there. He mounted and spurred out of the street, knowing that he was forgotten because her father's kiss was on her cheek.

VIII

THE last days of April were chilly in the Vosges. Old ridges of snow yet lay along the bleak hilltops, though a driving rain washed the white roads and carried yellow rivulets from the village manure-heaps. When Durand Laxart came home from the fields he no longer took pleasure in his house. His wife was in her fourth day of mourning for their dead child, and her face was relaxed and sodden with the tears which had flowed over it. His mother and the neighbors and the priest had been able to quiet her first clamors; but she did not eat, and wept in silence through the nights. Durand himself missed the baby, and felt shorn of a future by its death, having little heart to work among his sheep or sow his grain, though the country had never been so free from fear of Burgundians. But fathers seldom miss very young children as mothers miss them. With male impatience at the pain he could not relieve, he thought of beating it out of her with a stick; but, being a tender soul too easily pulled about by women, still postponed the task.

April rain stung the sashes and swept northward

up the Meuse. The man, hearing it, was thankful for shelter; but the woman, dropping her face in her hands, mourned:

"It doth beat on our little Catherine's grave."

"In God's name," said Durand, "is not the child in paradise? I have been thinking in the fields that they are the happiest who have no children in days like these. See the widow Davide at Domremy; her Haumette hath become a scandal."

"See my aunt Isabel Romée at Domremy," retorted Aveline, "robbed of both her children. Nothing has gone well with us since you took it on yourself to carry Jehannette to Vaucouleurs."

Durand looked at her without defense, for the result of his deed was yet hidden from him. No word had come to Domremy or Bury-la-Côte since the envoys from Poitiers departed. That remote march, separated from France by so much hostile country, would be the last to feel the movements of armies. Durand was sore with his responsibility.

"And if Jehannette raises sieges," taunted Aveline, "what profit will it be to thee?"

"We be all profited, should the English be driven out."

"But who pays for the horse she rode to Chinon?"

"Jacques hath paid for that."

"France is nothing to me," wailed the bereaved woman, twisting her hands, and wandering around the earthen floor. "I want the body of my child, that I may feel it in my arms; and I will have it this night," she cried, "to hold on my breast till morning. My mind is made up. Get your shovel," commanded Ave-

line, having no longer the terror of man or priest or death before her eyes. "You must come and take Catherine out of the ground."

Durand sat still with his mouth open. It was Aveline who went and brought the shovel from another chamber. Her dumpy figure startled him to his feet with a momentum which appalled him.

"But a man is not permitted to break open a grave in consecrated ground."

"A woman is permitted, even by heathen people, to have her own child."

"Let me bring my mother in," coaxed Durand; "she will give thee a posset, Aveline."

His wife, weeping distractedly, put a covering over her head, and challenged him to slight her appeal. "I will with my own hands tear the child out of the ground. Is it so far to the churchyard? It was farther to Vaucouleurs. Oh, it is easier for a man to rob a mother than to give her back her child."

Yielding again to the unheard-of demands made on him by the women of his family, Durand followed her out of the door. Southward, above the village, where the road turned toward the backbone of the hill, there was a cross where passers might kneel; and he vowed never to pass it again without a prayer if his patron saint would help him in this strait. He hoped the curé, going to see some sick person, would meet them, and inquire their errand, and forbid it. Yet his wife's passionate motherhood so stirred him that he rubbed moisture from his eyes with his hard knuckles.

The pair had only to cross the street in pouring rain, for the cover of great horse-chestnut-trees shel-

tered them quite into the churchyard. Houses in Bury-la-Côte were built in any place which suited the convenience of dwellers. Blank house-sides walled the corners of this inclosure, and here weeds of the previous summer, bent by many winds, lay half prostrate. It was not a dark night, for a moon drove somewhere overhead. When Durand turned to look behind, he could see the thatch and the brown-ridged tile of roofs showing sleek in the rain. The square-towered, low-built church stood in the center of its allotted ground. Aveline hurried along a stony walk, past wooden crosses, and the moss-grown stone cross of the crusader with carved swords overlapped on its arms. Durand followed like a thief. He now turned his mind to hoping she would be satisfied by looking at the little bed, without robbing herself of the comfort of praying there. It was close to the west wall of the church, outlined with river pebbles set by the mother's hand, and marked by a small cross of unhewed branches.

The dead then menaced a peasant's mind. They walked about him in darkness, near and familiar friends becoming silent and terrible visitors; and he dreaded them as he dreaded spells cast by witchcraft. Besides, Durand did not know what punishment he might bring upon himself by meddling with consecrated ground.

"Dig," commanded Aveline, raking the pebbles away. She felt the brine of her own tears, but not the rushing wetness of the night.

"Attend!" cautioned Durand, listening, with his foot on the shovel. The woman listened, and beat her hands together in a spasm of haste.

"It is my child crying under the ground!" She pierced and scooped the earth with her fingers in such fierce animal frenzy as set Durand to shoveling with all his might.

"Attend!" he spoke again, his senses returning. "The cry is in the church."

Aveline, her hands weighted with loam, unwillingly harkened also, the tone of authority in her husband's voice startling her into obedience. The cry did come from the church. She sat down, relaxing her body on the wet ground, and rolled up her eyes at Durand. Stone walls and the roar of falling rain muffled a very young child's wail. Aveline scrambled on her feet, and ran to the sunken walk at the front. The church of Bury-la-Côte faced southward. Shivering with superstitious dread, and considering what she would make him do if the door were locked,—for couvre-feu had rung,—Durand followed her a few steps. The huge latch clanked and the hinges creaked. He held his breath. Again the latch clanked, and Aveline passed him, ruuning from the church. He ran also, leaving the shovel behind, and paused only at his own hearth, abashed and puzzled by such a sight as has puzzled many a man. His wife sat with an infant on her knees, picking daintily at its wrappings with her mud-stained fingers, plainly appeased, and ready to turn from the earthen bed which held the body of her own child to accept some other woman's cast-off burden. All her sagging muscles lifted with satisfaction, and she bade him look at the creature's black eyes.

"We have our maid Catherine back," Aveline said, wagging her head aggressively. "Her good saint hath

taken pity on me this night, for I was beside myself —that thou knowest." She lifted the child in her arms, and kissed its broad features with devouring passion.

"It hath the look of Haumette Davide," pronounced Durand, with disgust.

Aveline faced him down. "Never name Haumette Davide to me again. In my lifetime she hath not set foot in the church of Bury-la-Côte. The child looks like our Catherine."

"But it is too young; our Catherine was three months old; and this, though lusty, is but a new-born babe."

"What does a man know of the age of young children? They are all lumps of wax alike to him. I found it close by the holy-water font. A miracle hath been wrought. Oh, you can believe that blessed St. Catherine would show herself to Jehannette, but you laugh at her taking pity and restoring a child to a poor, broken-hearted mother. Jehannette herself would not laugh."

"You do not believe that this is Catherine, or that any miracle hath been done, Aveline?"

She wavered, and cried out, "Will you take this comfort from me?"

And Durand put his arm around her neck, and swore to the self-deception also, before returning to mend Catherine's disturbed grave. "You shall keep it and bring it up; and if any man says it was not laid in the church by saints, he shall feel the smack of my fist; though, on my soul, its bands and wrappings do have a look of Domremy, and the tongues of the women I cannot control."

There was, however, only one Durand Laxart in the whole Meuse valley. Bury-la-Côte, being informed by Goussaincourt, timed the appearance of the child with the disappearance of Haumette Davide from the country. The infant's adoption might not have reached Domremy until midsummer if the story had not been winged by the miracle; but Goussaincourt promptly passed it on to Greux, and Greux could tell it to Domremy without stirring from the door-steps.

"Aveline is like a hen," said Isabel Romée. "Give her anything to hover, and she is satisfied. They will never make me believe the blessed St. Catherine, or any other saint, would stoop to handle Haumette Davide's bastard. Durand himself must be running daft; it is no wonder, in times like these, when miracles or mysterious voices or witches are in every town. It might be better for my children if more than one of them lay under a cross in this consecrated earth."

Isabel stood with her hand over her eyes between Jeanne's little window and the churchyard; and far southwestward that same hour of the morning Jeanne waited on the south bank of the Loire, looking across at Orléans. The army of a few thousand men had marched from Tours in less than three days, crossing the bridge at Blois, where gathered forces and provisions were united. It was a religious procession, led by chanting priests. Jeanne knew nothing of the country, but her plan had been to enter Orléans by the west gate, past the English fortifications. She saw that the captains who directed the march, and who knew the approaches to Orléans, had purposely brought the army to the wrong side of the river.

Making a detour to avoid posts near the bridge, which the English occupied on the south side, they halted opposite a channel betwixt two islands in the Loire. She would have attacked the bridge, but the captains would not. Besides, arches next the Orléans shore had been broken down by the besieged themselves.

The city had drawn a wide belt of ruin around itself outside the walls. Its faubourgs, or suburbs, which would certainly have been used by the enemy, had been torn down and burned by the people, who took refuge within the gates. West of this desolate strip some of the English works could be seen; but on the east side of Orléans, directly opposite the halting army, was one large bastile threatening the convoy. Trooping out against this came the citizens themselves. Their desperate attack held it on the defensive for hours, while boats carried the provisions, the promised maid, and two hundred men across the river. It was not so easy to transport the main body of the troops. Concerted action under the leadership of one mind was not yet possible to a fragmentary army with many captains. They turned and marched back to Blois, to cross the bridge there, and return to Orléans on the right bank of the Loire.

"En nom Dé!" said Jeanne to the Bastard of Orléans, who ruled the city for his kinsman, long a prisoner in England, as that young noble met her in the boats; "my counsel are safer and wiser than the counsel of men afraid to pass the English. I was told to go in boldly, and I bring you the best succor that ever knight, town, or city had—the help of the King of heaven."

"However you may enter, you are most welcome," he answered; "the provisions would be nothing without the maid"; and he brought her the colors of Orléans to put on over her armor—a huque, or blouse, of dark green, and above this a long-sleeved levite of crimson Brussels cloth lined with white satin, embroidered with the livery of Orléans, the nettle.

At eight o'clock in the evening, the convoy being safely received within the walls, Jeanne entered the Burgundy gate on the east side of the city. The Bastard of Orléans rode at her left hand. He was young, with a face not unlike his kinsman the dauphin, but warlike and full of action. The English made no attempt to cut off her entrance, a cautious policy of saving themselves from sorties having controlled the eight months' siege.

To Bertrand de Poulengy the pageant was like a dream of trampling among clouds. Wan from having slept in her armor in the fields, her bare head showing sweet and maid-like above the rich levite which hung over the plates of her leg-armor and covered her to the throat, Jeanne rode through seas of people. All the bells of Orléans rang, and thousands of faces wept and laughed for joy; thousands of voices shouted. The delivering maid, the mysterious, God-sent maid, had come. Women and children pressed close enough to touch her stirrup or her mailed fingers. Her eyes and voice caressed them. "Be of good cheer," she said; "God hath sent you succor."

Trumpeters went before her, and her little pennon, on which was displayed a dove; for her banner had been sent back in charge of Brother Pasquerel with

the army to Blois. Torches streamed in the night wind. La Hire and De Xantrailles rode behind her; her brother and her squires, her household and the two hundred lances, followed. From far-off streets, where crowds were hemmed in, came an impetus of sound like the wind through the oak woods, and all this mad enthusiasm rose at sight of a mere pucelle in armor, who had yet done nothing to prove that she was a deliverer, except make a religious march with troops her name had helped to collect. Bertrand could see her profile as she turned from side to side. It mothered her dear French, and said without speech, "These are my children." The fact lifted him in his saddle, that Jeanne had the kind of dominion which is greater than royalty. She was king of men's minds, and the accident of sex affected this power only by adding to it the maternal instinct. He felt strangely grown from his old provincial life, and joined to all his race, marching with the great of the world, as he rode in the third rank behind her. But to have no personal rights in her became infinitely more a loss. In the cathedral of St. Croix, where the cavalcade, and as many of the people as could crowd in, returned thanks, Bertrand knelt with his face in his hands; and forever afterward the odor of incense was to him the veritable breath of sacrifice.

Jeanne was taken across the city to lodge in the treasurer's house near the west gate.

Late in the night Bertrand woke to the crash of thunder. A wild storm raged over the town. The treasurer of the Duke of Orléans had received all of Jeanne's retinue into his house, her superior followers

being laid in one room along the width of a huge bed extending fifteen feet beside the wall. Pierre slept deeply, as did also the new squire; but Louis de Coutes, her page, rose up after Bertrand, and stood beside him looking out of a window. Jeanne was lodged in a secluded room on a high ground floor within the court, but this general guest-chamber overlooked the street. Sidewalks almost too narrow for the footing of one person, and tiny paving-stones, showed their minutest lines in the passing glare; and faces carved on protruding timber-ends and oak cross-pieces in the cemented house-fronts opposite smote the watchers' eyes, leaving an effect of sudden blindness. Bertrand could see the bold young features beside him with vividness surpassing daylight, for lightning surprises that which hides itself from the sun.

"I cannot sleep," said Louis de Coutes; "my conscience troubles me."

"No wonder it broke your rest," responded the squire; "such a thing hath not happened before in your lifetime."

"God wot it hath not. Messire de Poulengy, I have been insolent to you."

"And do you get up in the night to repent it? Truly the pucelle hath reformed the troops. Have no regard for my humors, Messire Louis. I have been quarrelsome two years. There will always be people who feel themselves badly used."

"But I did use you badly, for I wished myself to be squire instead of page."

"We are never satisfied," said Bertrand, openly; "I

am one of the pucelle's squires, but I wish to be all France to her."

The lightning flung out its blinding scroll, showing Louis de Coutes's eyes full of tears. The stirring of their fellows on the gigantic bed, and the crash of the storm, drove them to speak nearer each other's faces. Bertrand put his hand on the page's shoulder, but Louis shook it off with a shrug. "Messire, pages do not fight. I am of good family, and the King and La Trémouille both favor me; yet I am nothing but a page. The pucelle looks on me as a boy. You can fight, on the contrary, under her very eye."

"His conscience will yet drive him to prayer," remarked Bertrand, gently.

"I said pages could not fight," retorted Louis de Coutes, laughing; "but there is one page who intends to fight with the pucelle or for her."

"You will not fight me. I never had a word of love from her in my life. See Him draw His sword," said Bertrand, as the lightning blazed wide through Orléans, "who fills the mind of the pucelle."

But outside the city that vivid glory was considered anything but the sword of God. In barracks built of saplings and covered with thatch its search-light passed over hundreds of blanched faces and fixed eyes. The soldier, in all ages a simple creature easily touched in his superstitions, was in that year of grace 1429 the result of much religious hysteria. He would joyfully scale a wall with his ladder, and take boiling oil or lead in the face; but the apprehension of unseen powers threw him at once into physical frenzy. "That cursed witch," was whispered in the English

camp from ear to ear, "hath stirred up this storm. The French have brought hell to their aid."

When morning dawned clean and fair, they saw this creature of their terrors, little more than a bow-shot away, ride boldly out of Porte Renart, the western gate, with a rabble of citizens at her heels—those very Orléanais who had been afraid to show a head from this part of the city, where the wall was lowest. The English watched without drawing bow or training bombard upon them. She rode entirely around Orléans, as if to draw a line of invisible defense, with a few mounted followers and the trudging common people. Necks were craned over the English breastworks, and starting eyes received the impression of her vigorous young presence. She was like an apparition mounted on a white horse, her armor shining as mirrors reflect the sun. Her course being northward, a crimson scabbard was displayed at her left side; and every man in every boulevard knew it contained the awful sword of Fierbois, the sword of Martel, which once drove back the heathen, the sword which had leaped out of a church wall for the new salvation of France. "It is a sword of the devil," muttered the English; "she put it in the church wall by magic."

And, having never seen a woman in mail, they tried to discern her curious armor, with its swell of bust and hip, and that inward tapering between, where her girdle was clasped for the support of weapons. Instead of a vizored helmet she wore on her head a blue hat turned up with gold lacings, and the soft woman hair, cut short, flew about her ears, framing her face, for she looked at the English.

Orléans at that time was almost a parallelogram, though the northwest corner formed an acute angle, and the west wall rounded into an outward curve. There were five gates: two on the north, Berniére and Parisis; one, Burgundy, or St. Aignan, on the east; St. Catherine at the entry of the bridge on the south; and, on the west side, Porte Renart.

Jeanne had never seen any fortifications except those permanent defenses drawn around old cities. The walls of Orléans were from seven to nine feet thick, and from twenty-two to thirty feet high, set with thirty-nine towers. No parapet guarded the top, but a temporary barrier of wood had been carried around. The towers were from two to three hundred feet apart, except at the gates, which were flanked by them. They were built three stories high, garnished with dormer openings and machicolations, a kind of jutting galleried top with open spaces below for shooting missiles or pouring down boiling lead on assailants. The walls of Orléans were in good condition. What Jeanne tried to comprehend with prehensile reach and grasp of mind was the blockade the English had drawn around them. And so swift were her military impressions that she has been called a tactician of the first order.

The English had one bastile and four great boulevards extending from the faubourg opposite the northwest gate to the Loire. In midstream, on a little island, was another boulevard, and on the south shore another. The Tournelles, a fort with a drawbridge, guarded the south end of the bridge, and on the bank fronting that was a boulevard which was itself pro-

tected by a bastile. One more bastile was planted eastward on the south shore; and on the north shore, east of the city, built around the ruin of a church, was that large bastile, called St. Loup, which the citizens had held at bay when the maid entered Orléans. This commanded the road to Jargeau, from which the English drew many of their supplies, and was one of their strongest forts. The five works on the west side were connected by covered trenches. Jeanne learned that a bastile was a fortress of wood or stone with double ditches or moats, while boulevards were earthworks consisting of single moats drawn around an inclosure.[1] Isolated, or placed before a gate or around a bastile, the boulevards bristled over the crest with a ruff of iron-tipped spikes called chevaux-de-frise. Both kinds of English fortifications were rectangular, with a belt of moats at the four corners. The principal English camp was west of the city.

When Jeanne had made the entire circuit outside the walls, and returned to the Renart gate, she called to the English, with her mailed hands around her mouth: "Attend! Here is news"; and a bowman beside her shot an arrow to which was bound a piece of parchment. Her voice, reaching out in a prolonged tone, fell on the invaders' ears before the arrow stopped short of their intrenchments. The parchment carried her second letter to the English, bidding them leave the country and avoid bloodshed. One had been written for her in Poitiers, and she had despatched it from Tours. A soldier in hose and tunic and long, pointed footwear ran out and picked up the weighted

[1] Barthélemy de Beauregard.

arrow. He shouted insulting words at the maid, and his mates howled in chorus. They would hoot the devil to his face.

"Now God help them," said Jeanne, as she turned in at the gate. "If they will not be gone, I will make them such a ha-hu as will never be forgotten."

In these days of enormous populations the armies that fought battles of far-reaching consequences in the past seem incredibly small.[1] Existing rolls of the English soldiery prove that less than six thousand men were camped around Orléans; and the army gathered to Jeanne's standard, including the garrison, amounted to about the same number. There were, however, many pages, bow- and arrow-makers, and laborers, as well as camp-followers and parasites, which always infest troops, on both sides. And Orléans lacked even this small army until four days after the maid's entrance. The Bastard set out secretly in the night, and went to Blois to hasten the return of the troops by the north shore of the Loire. He found all the captains quarreling, and about to disband. La Trémouille, the dauphin's favorite, had come to Blois, and openly ridiculed a campaign under a woman. The Bastard of Orléans, desperate with the needs of his city, rallied the men, and led them himself on the road.

[1] "Abundance of precious metals, the facilities of transportation, the accumulated works of generations, knowledge of how to utilize the resources of nature, and increase of populations, have given to great states to-day an assemblage of forces out of all proportion with former times."—"L'Armée Anglaise vaincu par Jeanne d'Arc," MM. De Molandon et Baron de Beaucorps.

When they were distantly seen from the walls of Orléans, and Jeanne rode out to meet them with five hundred of the garrison mounted to attend her, the strangest thing happened that has ever been recorded against the courage of a great nation. It seems that the English might have made a sortie, and taken her as she passed betwixt their silent boulevards; but not a soldier stirred. As they saw her near at hand they cowered below the earthworks—great-limbed Britons, whose name has been a terror in the earth for a thousand years, whose stubborn valor has passed into a proverb of our time. Some of the maid's followers eyed this silent and motionless panic with distrust; but Bertrand de Poulengy remembered the dumb terror that held numb and unable to move the men who wanted to throw her into the river at Bar-sur-Aube.

The English commander Talbot had borne part in many campaigns. He had pushed the line of fortifications around Orléans. No more sagacious soldier had been sent across the Channel; and the Duke of Bedford, Regent of England and general of this invasion of France, had then his headquarters not far away at Chartres. Neither martial skill nor awe of regal power moved the soldiers from their trenches. A reinforcement was expected under Sir John Fastolf; but what could increase of numbers do for men who felt themselves unable to move while the maid led her troops into Orléans?

Artillery as it is now understood was then a power unknown. Orléans had mounted upon its walls, or on wheeled platforms which could be pushed outside

the gates, seventy-one mouths of fire, all made of copper, as a chronicler has told us, some of the cannon being lent by a neighboring town. The English fortifications were armed with better artillery. Gunpowder, though a factor of war since the battle of Crécy, was not used at all as an explosive. This siege was not made a subterranean war, yet the English had miners with them, and large vases of water were kept filled within the walls, and men watched for the wrinkles which would betray any displacement of earth underneath. The western part of the city, on account of its low wall, was most exposed to bombardment; but nobody fled from it, and the pucelle had been lodged there.

Knowledge of many things was crushed into Jeanne's mind at once. These days were one colossal dream, in which she grasped to herself, swift minute after swift minute, the facts and utensils of war. She had heard of ballistæ and catapults, ponderous machinery for throwing stones, great beams of which yet cumbered the walls; but gunpowder artillery delighted her. There were bombards on wheels, and stationary cannon, both loaded with balls of stone through the mouth, and smaller culverins discharging bullets of lead. Fusees and fire-lances were also projected to set in a blaze the enemy's works. Some of the stone cannon-balls weighed a hundred and fifty pounds. The noise of this powder warfare was great, but it had not the force to breach walls, though, like all the fighting of the middle ages, it was destructive to human life.

In the warm May afternoon of the day the troops

entered, Bertrand stood in the courtyard polishing Jeanne's armor.

"They shall call it white as long as I am her squire," he said to Pierre, who sat on a bench watching him; "this new D'Aulon hopes to be knighted sooner than I do. I will say this for Messire d'Aulon—he can buckle the parts together with speed, and he will make a fair knight, but never lead retinue like De Metz of Novelopont."

"I wish we had more knights among us like De Metz," said Pierre, letting his eyes move to the stables on the opposite side of the court. Pierre was yet armed, and Bertrand had removed only his gauntlets to handle the steel plates. "A council has just been held without my sister, and my lord the Bastard had much trouble to pacify one knight, who was for giving up his standard and withdrawing. 'I will fight with your maid,' saith he; 'but I will never fight under her. What doth a peasant wench know of war? Let her go home and milk her cows.'"

The little curtains of chain-mail which hung below Jeanne's body-armor swept with a clank against the bench as Bertrand shifted the leg on which he rested it. His blue eyes spoke for him to Pierre.

IX

THERE was silence in the town following the morning's excitement. Gunners were resting in the English camp, and no stone burst over the tile roofs. The lull of that booming made stillness quiver in the ears, and nobody trod past the gates. White clouds moved luminous across the blue. The low sky of France, unswept by wind, tempering its sunshine by a divinely bright grayness, lay brooding growths over that whole country, from the great plain of the Beauce north of Orléans, the granary of France in good times, where many horizons cannot contain the sheaves, to the long waste of the Sologne southward. Both were then unplowed and unplanted, trampled by hoofs, and turning green only with the irrepressible moist verdure of spring.

Jeanne lay asleep in a paneled room, which she shared nightly with the treasurer's little daughter, under a vaulted ceiling of blue-stone with many weird white griffins cut on its arch. The sashes of three round-topped windows were opened inward. No sound came from the court, for Bertrand polished the

armor with a piece of soft leather, and the joints of his own harness moved silently on rivets. When he spoke again, his voice did not mount to the sloping window-sills.

"Some of these knights complain that since Franciscan monks began to roam about the country, teaching people their doctrine, we have nothing but mysteries and revelations. In God's name, how can they ill-treat a pucelle who led them to-day past a cowed foe, that they have been running from ever since you and I were born?"

Pierre shook his head, and so freed himself of anxiety.

"I know nothing of these Southern humors. The best thing I have seen in France is that good well of St. Martin at Tours. I have been thirsting for it," said Pierre, lowering his narrowed eyes to the basking ground, "ever since we came away."

The two young men were startled by a cry through the open sashes:

"My arms! my arms! Quick! quick! my arms! The blood of Frenchmen is running on the ground!"

Bertrand gathered up the pieces of armor, and ran with Pierre through a long, narrow passage which led to Jeanne's chamber. She was standing in the middle of the floor, where she had leaped from the bed. Her eyes had the rapt look left in them by her visions. Her squire with swift fingers, and her brother with clumsier efforts, buckled on breastplate and backpiece. Thigh-and-front-plates were adjusted, leaving the back of the leg free to press the horse; the feet covered with mailed shoes; the armpieces and gauntlets made

fast; the helmet, the belt and sword. She flew to the courtyard. No Louis de Coutes was in sight with her horse. Pierre brought it, bitting its mouth and strapping on the high-backed saddle while Bertrand fastened the mailed housings. They helped her mount from the bench, and her squire flew back for her standard. There was no time to bring it forth; he passed it to her through the window.

"Follow!" she cried to them, as Pierre opened the gate; and both flung themselves on their horses. They began to hear a tumult and shouts of disaster eastward. They swerved behind her across one street, and flying horse-hoofs struck fire from stones paving that billowy, rising and falling, slightly bent thoroughfare to the old Roman road called Rue Burgundy. Bloody-headed citizens passed carrying wounded men. Bertrand shouted to Pierre through his teeth, as they rode knee to knee:

"The fools went out to take the bastile of St. Loup without her."

A third of a league and three minutes brought them to the Burgundy gate, which was already open to let in a rabble of retreating French. On these came—archers and men-at-arms, captains, citizens, and cross-bowmen, those mounted pressing in first, those on foot flying wild-eyed. And after them, in full career, were the pursuing English.

Jeanne rose in her stirrups with the lift of an eagle, and raised her banner high above the panic-driven mob. Now was heard a woman's voice, a leader's voice, an angel's voice, bell-like, spreading its tones wave upon wave, until they seemed to reach the hori-

zon, to ripple over the Beauce, to die away in the Sologne, to drive eastward far across the bastile of St. Loup:

"Amys! Amys! ayez bon courage! Sus! Sus! Ils sont tous nostres!"[1]

Like an arrow, the maid and the white banner shot through the Burgundy gate at the English, and they paused and wavered. The foremost pursuers shrank down bodily, and moved backward, facing her. At her sweet and terrible cry they turned, howling in English or Franco-Norman:

"The witch! The witch! To cover—the witch is let loose!"

The rallied French followed her. Those who had fled farthest ran wild with courage on her track. It had been their custom so many years to scatter before the English that the sight of English backs frenzied them. All the knights roused in the city joined in the pursuit; the Bastard of Orléans, with his retinue, came flying from the ducal house by St. Catherine's gate; the young Duc d'Alençon, La Hire, De Xantrailles, De Metz, each with his men shouting to the rescue, flew over the Roman road, crossed the double moats, and scaled the works of St. Loup.

They drove, they slew, they swept the enemy. The maid was in the church around which the bastile was built, pulling refugees from the belfry, sending back prisoners. Everywhere St. Catherine's sword was seen as lightning. Shouts rang beyond Orléans and the English camp. Before the camp, roused by trumpets, could hurry reinforcements around the walls, St. Loup

[1] Her actual battle-cry.

was taken, sacked, riddled, destroyed. The eastern stronghold of the English was gone.

When it was finished, the sweating soldiers, flushed and roaring with success, abated the noise of their joy over France's first victory in years, for the pucelle was down on her knees protecting a dying Englishman.

"Let him alone!" she cried, striking a lance from his breast. "Do not hurt him any more! Why will they not go back to their homes? I cannot bear to see them die!"

This was the witch—this tender face, like the face of some dear maid at home, dropping tears under a lifted vizor. Her enemy died with this image upon his eyeballs.

But in the city all the bells rang, and people ran laughing through the streets. Now had their maid given proof that she was sent. St. Loup was taken, and the English were cut off from Jargeau. The soldiers would have lain upon the pavement and let her ride over their bodies. They were for going out to attack the Tourelles next morning, but became religious as soon as it was known that the maid desired to keep that day holy, it being Ascension day. "She is forever taking the bon Dieu,"[1] they said to one another; "her common food is nothing but bread and watered wine."

Both besieged and besiegers knew the most important English fortress was that called the Tourelles, on the end of the bridge. The English, by spreading their forces from boulevard to boulevard over a space

[1] Sacrament.

of nearly two leagues, diminished their strength; but the fort on the bridge was well manned.

The bridge, a stone structure of the twelfth century, had nineteen arches, and from the city gate of St. Catherine to the south shore was more than a thousand feet long. Beyond the fifth arch it rested on and crossed a narrow island, where a chapel, a hospital, and a few houses remained. Here some houses were built also upon the bridge, and they had been converted into a small bastile. Above the twelfth arch was a venerable cross, and at the end of the bridge was the strong fort of the Tourelles, separated from the Sologne side by a drawbridge, and guarded on land by both a bastile and a boulevard. The French fortified these towers for their own safety. The English had assaulted and carried the place in October. That same day their commander, Salisbury, was killed in it by a stone cannon-ball. The retreating French broke down those arches giving entrance to St. Catherine's gate, and their enemies barricaded the broken end. To retake the Tourelles would not only clear the blockade half-way around Orléans: it would cut the English off from the object of their siege, which was invasion south of the Loire.

"I shall be wounded to-day betwixt my neck and my breast," said Jeanne, as her squire armed her the second morning after Ascension day. Bertrand's lips whitened and stiffened.

"How do you know that?"

"The counsel have told me."

She seldom noticed him when he was girding her buckles, but this time she put her hands affectionately on his shoulders. As he stood level with her own eyes

he trembled with unsteadiness, which the maid could not understand, and he breathed with the rise and fall of her own breast in its steel cuirass.

"Bertrand, I am growing to love you almost as well as I do Pierrelo," she said, with large and open natural affection. "You have been a man since you came into France. You have seen I was born for this labor. And what if blood must go out of me this day? I have told the dauphin I cannot last above a year or two, and he had best make use of me. Have you ever thought it a good to die?"

"Yes, I have so thought it," he answered, facing her steadily, his eyes swimming in rapture stolen from her touch. Jeanne had not a woman's sense of this great passion. She would as freely and honestly have laid her hands on the knight of Novelopont, who had just received back from the dauphin the moneys he had expended on her journey into France, or the Duc d'Alençon, whom she had promised to keep safe for his young wife. She was a comrade to every man whose strength went with hers against the invader.

"I will tell you," said Jeanne, in a whisper; "since these voices have come to me, there is such anguish of homesickness to be gone with them when they leave me that my spirit leaps at thought of death. Oh, think of being through—well through—with what we are obliged to undertake! Yet I am so alive," laughed the maid. "I enjoy my body; I love my family, and my home, and this world; but more than anything else under the sky I love sacred France. Bertrand, if you could hear my heart beat, the sound would be nothing but 'France—France—France—France!'

"The battle this day will go hard with us," said

Jeanne, removing her hands from her squire, and letting him put on her helmet. She pushed up the grotesque pointed vizor, and her voice, coming from the case of steel, was weirdly prophetic.

"It will not be until my standard touches the steep side of the boulevard that we can go in. I do not know when the moment will be, but I shall be told. Bertrand, I want you to bear my standard in the assault of the Tourelles; but do not press into the foss and let the banner float against the works until I tell you; it will do no good until the English are given into our hands."

Early as it was, the bombarding had begun, though gunpowder was used in such insufficient quantities, and the cannon around Orléans were trained at such angles, that projectiles tumbled perpendicularly from the height to which they were thrown over the city. Orléans answered with the mouths of its pieces through embrasures in the walls. Like other towns, Orléans could make its own gunpowder, mixing the parts, however, so that minimum force was generated in the burning. But there were no firearms to be carried by the marching soldiers. Archers and arbalétriers formed the most considerable portion of any body of troops. The rule throughout Christendom was to support any number of men-at-arms with three times as many archers.

Cavalry, as the word is now understood, did not exist. Men-at-arms and archers both went mounted or afoot, as their undertakings required, and in action they were necessarily separated and independent of each other. Soldiers who hewed with guisarmes and

pole-axes, or drove with lances, hammers, and swords, could not be embarrassed by archers, over whose pickets and bodies they must ride or run from behind, and whose bolts they must risk after passing if both advanced together, for battle was then a mighty cluster of hand-to-hand duels. Knights, nobles, princes, and even kings, threw themselves at the head of their followers into these combats. No man stood in his place to be shot at; but he picked him out a lusty opponent, and if he had the good fortune, progressed foot by foot over fallen bodies into the enemy's ground.

At dawn that seventh day of May nearly every soldier in Orléans, obeying the maid, had gone shriven to mass. No lewd women had been allowed to join the march from Tours or Blois. The barracks were indeed like monks' cells, and every profane word was punished by discipline, at her orders, and herein the captains regarded their sovereign's command to submit themselves to her direction better than in matters of war.

One commander neglected the duty of confession, remembering it only as he galloped past the misty cathedral front with his retinue. He struck his mailed hip and swore, and Poton de Xantrailles, riding near him, laughed aloud.

"Hug thy holy bones and chuckle, Poton," retorted La Hire. "A man that hath nothing but a clean conscience inside his armor, and gives his mind to handling a shield as thou dost, is safe anywhere."

There was a glut of men at the Burgundy gate. Horses could scarcely move in the crowd. Jeanne's

standard showed near the portal, and behind it, over the Bastard, was displayed the great red banner of Orléans, covered with needlework. The governor of the city, having received conflicting orders from that council held the day the troops entered, refused to open the Burgundy gate. He had been told that the attack on the English camp was to be made through Porte Renart, and he was not the man to give way, even though both pucelle and Bastard commanded him.

"Break his head with his keys, and throw him over the wall!" shouted La Hire, who, sputtering with the effort to keep back words unfit for the pucelle's ears, swore with tremendous zeal by the baton.

Orléans was surrounded by a foss which, under the gates, expanded to deep paved courts. As the Porte Burgundy was forced from within, the drawbridge fell with a clang, and the crowd burst out, gentler riders and less aggressive foot-soldiers being thrown backward by the recoil. Each captain sought to put in order again his retinue of twenty-five or thirty lances and seventy-five archers. Jeanne's confessor, who always rode with her as both priest and surgeon, was pushed on his palfrey, which replaced the jaded Domremy beast, across the front of La Hire's great horse.

"Behold the reward of swearing by the baton," shouted De Xantrailles over the general discomfort. "La Hire hath not confessed himself, but he is permitted to go out with the broad side of a friar for a breastplate."

"La Hire will confess himself now," retorted

Jeanne's convert. "Turn thee, Brother Pasquerel, for when we pass yon portal, adieu, religion. La Hire hath committed the usual sins of a man-at-arms, as well as he could behind the pucelle's back, who gives a man no chance even to wash his mouth with a good sweet oath, and he begs for absolution."

The friar, reining alongside that squat, broad suit of armor, murmured at the casque which was inclined toward him. Whether he spoke forgiveness or reproof to the sinner, La Hire accepted it with a hearty "Amen." He set spurs to his horse and shot through the gate.

"Now, God," said he aloud and free-hearted, "be pleased to do for La Hire this day what La Hire would do for thee if he were God and thou wert La Hire."

There was no longer a bastile of St. Loup to prevent the easy transportation of troops across the river. Boats landed the army on the south shore, where they had first halted. The English camp on the west side took no part in the action of this day, except continuing to bombard the city.

The little bastile called St. Jean le Blanc had been taken by the French in a sortie on the day after Ascension, its garrison retreating to the bridge boulevard. This was the first time that Jeanne had seen chausse-trappes—small pieces of iron which, falling in any position, turned a foot-piercing point uppermost. The English threw chausse-trappes behind themselves, and every lance, English or French, had them as part of his equipment.

The French archers advanced within shot of the Tourelles, each carrying with him a tough, sharp picket

to drive into the ground if such bristling defense should be needed against horses. With arrows laid in a row under his feet ready to the grasp, he sent his feathered shots into the bodies of the enemy. A horizontal snow-storm thus swept the Tourelles. Long practice was required to make an expert archer, while lances had only to drive and dare, to hew with guisarme or strike with hammer, protecting themselves with their pavas, or shields. Crossbowmen also, setting their weapons point downward on the ground, and holding them with foot in stirrup and bow across their knees, while they whirled double handles to adjust arrows in grooves, shot bolts by a trigger which exceeded the strength of the human hand on a bowstring. The range of crossbowmen was much greater than the range attained by archers, though the English were said to excel them with good single yew bows and yard-long shafts.

Five hundred men fought in the Tourelles, and they were made a host by William Gladsdal, a mere squire, who, though far below other captains in social rank, had merited and received entire command of the south shore. He drew his force into the outwork or bastile on the bank, which was unusually steep from the bottom of the moat to the top of the earthen crest. Boiling oil, molten lead, stones, arrows, lances, axes, maces, or clubs fought down the ascending French. Carrying St. Loup by assault was a light feat of arms compared with driving a man like Gladsdal from his position. His men shouted insulting words at the witch of the Armagnacs. The noise of attack and repulse was terrific. Huge pincers dragged timbers

from the bastile. The French, stooping forward with their shields slung over their backs for defense, ran up scaling-ladders to seize their enemies at the top; and again and again were the ladders flung down, with stones, molten lead, and boiling oil on the heads of the climbers. Shouts,—"England and St. George!" "France and St. Denis!" "Remember Agincourt!" —the cries of captains, the clang of axes on armor, the crack of oak when split, the twang of bowstrings, and the steady singing of arrows—all this confusion of battle was heard by Jeanne with swooning ears. From the first ladder planted she had fallen, with an arrow piercing that joint of her armor where the shoulder moved on the neckpiece.

A knight lifted her out of the ditch. She felt the jarring as he dragged her back from the press.

"You are hurt, pucelle; here, take my horse."

"Who are you, messire?"

He threw up his vizor and showed his face. "De Gamaches, who flouted you in council. But I was mistaken in you, pucelle. Bear me no malice, and take my horse."

"I bear no one malice, Messire de Gamaches, and I will gladly take your horse."

Bertrand's arm steadied her in the saddle. She saw her banner half furled in his hand. She swooned in a vineyard beyond the ruined faubourg, the bolt of anguish still piercing her. Brother Pasquerel, and Pierre, and many more drew around her, hesitating to pull it out, though they took her armor off and bathed her face. The point stuck out behind her the length of her finger. She herself sat up and laughed,

to take the anguish from their faces, and jerked it out, drenching her breast with blood. Pierre held her steadily, but Bertrand doubled forward on his knees and hid his eyes from that blood and from the sacred baring of her shoulder, which the friar oiled and bound up.

She prayed voicelessly, lying on the earth among the vines; and when the first faintness was past she rose to her knees.

The attack on the Tourelles had not begun until ten o'clock, all the troops being first conveyed across the river. It was afternoon when Jeanne noticed the decreasing noise of battle. Discouraged assailants, led vainly by the Bastard, D'Alençon, La Hire, and De Xantrailles, were drawing back from the Tourelles out of bow-shot, and in spite of their captains making for the boats.

"En nom Dé!" besought the maid, "run—bear word to the Bastard! Tell him to let them eat and drink and rest. The men are faint. When their strength comes again we will go in, for the place is ours."

Noise of cannonading continued on the north shore, and smoke spread there like a stratum of tinted mist. The cannon in the Tourelles and the boulevard, which had done little execution in a hand-to-hand struggle, now threw stones into the fields across the ruined faubourg. Perhaps the French, while they ate and drank such food as had been brought from the town, with missiles like small globes dropping about them, remembered, and cursed their leaders in remembering, that it was not the pucelle's counsel to attempt these works. She had wished first to attack the English camp, but, with good sense as strong as genius, made herself subservient to the captains.

All the western plain and river turned rosy as the sun slipped low. There was an old path winding into the trampled vineyard, and it became pink under the pink sky. The two towers of the Tourelles, one round, the other many-angled, swam aloft in a sea of yellowing light. That embankment by the river, where an unprotected battery had been taken the day before, betwixt St. Jean le Blanc and the bridge, stood up clean-cut in the magnifying air.

Gladsdal's garrison, serving their guns, and less troubled by the scattered French than by marksmen on the city walls, saw with astonishment that their assailants were again massing. More than that, they saw the white armor of the witch who had been killed rise up in the weird horizontal sunset light.

"There are white birds fluttering about her head!" some of them gasped to others; "do you see the white birds?"

"She was carried off with an arrow through her body, and here she comes at mad gallop!"

The maid dashed breakneck into the ditch, her banner carried by a squire racing beside her. It touched, it swept the earthen wall. Again that sweet bell-voice, which carried the soul of France to certain victory, rolled over the doomed Tourelles:

"Ayez bon courage! Ils sont tous nostres!"

Men-at-arms flung their shields over their backs, and plunged from ladder-tops into the bastile—archers, knights, captains, nobles.

They carried it; they forced the boulevard behind it. The English ran to the drawbridge to retreat into the Tourelles. At the Orléans end of the bridge the pucelle's voice was answered by rejoicing cries. St.

Catherine's gate flew open, the garrison and citizens of Orléans running with timbers to cover the broken arches and assault Gladsdal on their side. Old Jehan of Lorraine, the master cannoneer, who had once fallen into English hands and lost his piece when it was trundled on its movable table outside the gates, danced in rapture on the wall; for the ball that he sent from his battery, as the boulevard was carried, cut away the Tourelles drawbridge under the English, and Gladsdal and his men were dashed into the river. On went the shouting French, casting across the gap planks torn from outworks. The Tourelles, the prisoners therein, the bridge, the battle, were theirs, and they marched with the maid through St. Catherine's gate into Orléans.

"She drives the English, and then she weeps over them as they die," exulted the soldiers. It had been indeed a great waste of life. "More prisoners should have been taken and held to ransom," declared La Hire; "men who receive but eight deniers a day for military service need all the Englishmen they can catch."

This often-described battle, which turned the tide of invasion and changed the history of the world, was ended; for next morning the English raised the siege, and setting fire to their line of remaining works, drew away. A blockade which had lasted eight months, and worn out all the military resources of the kingdom, was broken by the maid in three days. Te Deum was chanted in the cathedral, and people ran shouting in the streets all night long, for the bells rang without ceasing in Orléans.

X

ON a warm afternoon late in July, when the sun was getting low behind the Domremy hills, Mengette watched skylarks rise from the ground. She had two flocks of geese on the uplands, her own and Isabel Romée's, and kept them apart, nipping grass, and from wandering into the young vines below, for all the vineyards were weighted with green grapes bunched near the earth. The vines were like bushes tied to stakes with wisps of straw. Wide, open fields spread along the ridge to an oak jungle southward. Once, when the young maids were racing on this ridge, Jehannette had seemed to blow like a leaf, outstripping them all, and they looked at her as at one who had died and come to life again. Mengette remembered that this had caused her to feel her first pang of separateness from her playmate. And now Jehannette, parted from Domremy but six months, was at Rheims making the dauphin to be crowned!

Jean Morel and Gerardin d'Épinal had brought the news from Châlons, where they saw her and the marching army. The siege of Orléans was raised, and the

English had been driven from Jargeau, from Meung and Beaugency, and had been beaten in the battle of Patay. Where these places were Mengette did not know, but she had the words by heart. Jargeau, Meung, Beaugency, and Patay all taken in ten days! Jean Morel and Gerardin d'Épinal said that Jehannette was leading a host which increased every hour; for whoever had a horse clapped saddle on it and joined the cavalcade, bearing his own expenses. Troyes had opened its gates and surrendered to the dauphin and the maid—Troyes, where the treaty disinheriting him had been made by his mother and the English! Town after town delivered up its keys and returned to its natural allegiance. The pucelle, without a battle, was sweeping all the North into her sovereign's hands!

"'The pucelle' is the name they give her," said Gerardin, proud that Jehannette had held his child at the baptismal font; "and she goes like a great general, in cloth of gold, on magnificent horses, changing them so that they are never jaded. The soldiers have an awe of her as of something divine. In the field she sleeps in her armor, and the life of her body is hidden from them; yet she flung herself off her horse, and shook Jean and me both by our hands, as soon as she saw us. They say the dauphin would have kissed her when she came to him after raising the siege of Orléans, but not even he hath the effrontery to handle her. And how high is the look of her countenance! She laughs like little Jehannette yet, but I would as lief have St. Margaret's or St. Catherine's eyes on me as hers. She wears burnished mail so white that it shines dazzling, and has squires and servants to wait

on her. We saw Pierre and Bertrand de Poulengy, and for confessor she hath the friar who set forth to the wars with Pierre. And everybody in Châlons looked once at the Dauphin Charles and his retinue of nobles, and all the time thereafter at the pucelle."

Jacques and Isabel had gone to Rheims, to see the dauphin crowned and to bring home their children. They had been absent more than a week. The curé and Jacquemine and Durand Laxart went with them, but Mengette felt quietly sure they would not return with Jehannette in their company; and if not with Jehannette, neither with Pierre. She endured vicarious pangs for her dear playmate uprooted from home, though how much worse it would be for Jehannette to come home and find Domremy so changed!

The curé and Jacques being both without horses, Durand Laxart took the priest in his cart, while Jacques had been obliged to borrow the Widow Davide's beast, which was grudgingly lent, though she would receive for the loan a measure of wine at the vintage. The journey from Domremy to Rheims was over sunny country, where the mud of spring was long dried up. But Jacques d'Arc was going to see a glorified daughter, and the Widow Davide did not know where her Haumette was. Human bitterness grew in the woman at such raising up and pulling down. Mengette knew the Widow Davide's tongue began to work the very day Jean Morel and Gerardin d'Épinal brought their wonderful story. She was cross in her wine-shop when Domremy rang its church bell, and crosser when Greux, though Burgundian in its preferences, rang also for the maid of Lorraine.

A rider spurred up the long ascent to Bury-la-Côte; and there Durand Laxart danced wildly in the street, and Bury-la-Côte rang its bell also. Thus from town to town up the Meuse valley sped news of the maid; and from Domremy to Vaucouleurs, where the people made a public procession of thanks, the bells, through which she heard her voices best,—the bells which were like her own pealing cry,—rang her victories.

As soon as the priest, excused from his offices, and Jacques and Isabel were on the road to Rheims, jealousy of the D'Arc family spread over Domremy like fog from the river. Its sinuous twistings were in every house, and Mengette saw the women turn their heads when she went toward Greux with her geese, instead of giving her a "good day." The pucelle's closed, shed-shaped home seemed to rouse antagonism. Mengette saw her neighbors pointing at it and laughing. They had once talked about Jehannette's visions, and all knew her long waiting and sorrow. Did it amuse them that she had burst from her years of preparation into swift, miraculous action, gaining for the French five great battles in two weeks, and leading the dauphin in victorious progress through a hostile country to his coronation? Mengette had no envy, and did not understand that the pucelle's sudden rise before all Christendom might affect her neighbors like their own downfall.

The wine-shop door was shut in Choux's face, his cronies sitting with the cool garden under their eyes at the back of the house. Unused to being banished from the wine-shop without having his ear pinched, Choux waited in the street, hunched on the stone coping

which surrounded the manure-heap; and the Widow Davide came out, and denounced him openly as a sorcerer with a voice from the devil, a consorter with people who did things by witchcraft. His own foulness made more wholesome by the stable odor in which he sat, he thrust his face at her, and called boldly on Valentin to torment her at night, which sent the Widow Davide clattering into the church for holy water and a cautious prayer or two against the evil eye.

Choux's face projected more and more like a beast's in front of his ears. Mengette's abhorrence of him in ebb and flow tossed her clean virgin spirit, but she held on to duty, and made regular confession of it. Father Fronte laid no penance on her, even when she owned to wondering if Choux would never die; for when his hissing grew unendurable, the old order of things lost their charm, and she reached the state of constantly desiring to have him under ground, tied in his last clean cap and deaf to voices. After Isabel's reproof he and Valentin had shrieked no more aloud, but they took to whispering; and Mengette's skin prickled all over when she heard them filling darkness with fierce sibilations, like a pair of colossal ganders. She knew there was a Valentin, though Isabel had scarcely believed in his existence and soon forgot him. Nightly, month after month, his invisible company oppressed the house and gave it an uncanny name. The priest privately exorcised him, and punished Choux by withdrawing the church's consolations for a time; but that old sinner no longer cared for the bon Dieu. Father Fronte began to regard him as a poor idiot,

the sport of fiends, more to be pitied and endured than corrected.

Jacquemine now had much of Pierre's work to do, and sulked continually, being far from strong; and when Mengette gladly helped him, he could talk of nothing but his troubles. Yet, in spite of these things, Mengette never came on a day when she did not live with zest. The July afternoon put Domremy out of her head. Creamy air, smooth and soft upon the cheeks, strewed wisps of gray or opal color against green hills. The Meuse was nearly hid in bushes. She could see Jean Morel and Gerardin d'Épinal at work in their vineyards below the oak woods. These travelers, who had gone as far as fifteen leagues to Châlons, were behind in tying up the vines; but they worked with the stir of the world in their blood. They knew the vintage was going to be good, and declared the last Burgundian riders had trampled the march of Lorraine. As for that wicked Queen Isabel, she now sat in Paris quaking from morning till night, though the sun was there so hot that dunghills reeked; and what would she do when her crowned son turned from Rheims to march with the pucelle on Paris?

A skylark rose from a wide level between the flocks of geese, wheeling and singing, sweet and lilting, until he was out of sight, though his voice seemed as near as ever. Mengette stood with her face turned upward, searching for his dot of body against dazzling light; motes swam before her eyes in the upper air; then the lark appeared, wheeling downward. His rejoicing did not cease an instant. When higher than a hundred feet, he dropped like a stone, head downward, de-

scribed one more circle, and alighted in the grass. All the time his singing was so joyful that it made Mengette laugh. He did not mind her near approach, but was up again, for pure gladness, and out of sight again, his voice bubbling in every direction over the sky; then down he wheeled and dropped, circled once more, and hid himself in the grass. So he kept it up until the sun was almost gone. Mengette's neck ached with supporting her back-tilted head while he was aloft, and her lips were stretched with the laughter of delight. She loved him, and had loved his fathers before him all her summers. Her dazzled eyes could hardly see the stony land mottled with specks of white.

Therefore when an outcry broke from Domremy street, in front of the church, she looked down the long hill shoulder, blind to its cause. Her own house and the garden behind it, crowded with growing things, were a blur till her eyes were fitted to the lower light. The black wheat, or buckwheat, which made her winter bread, was all in flower, a gray smear within the wall.

Mengette could hear Choux screaming her name, and her first startled thought was that the devil might be carrying him off. She felt her whole body blanch with fright. Then she began to see people running, and a man and a woman dragging Choux by the shoulders, his hump and heels scraping the ground. Domremy had risen against sorcery.

It was a sin, but Mengette's next thought was fear that the two flocks of geese might mix or stray or damage vines if she left them, so strong is the hold of small cares on poverty. But compassion, unready

in her brain, was swifter in her muscles. Directly another flying figure added itself to the village mob. Mengette, breathless, dragged at Choux to liberate him from the mob's hands. Her neighbors, who knelt in church with her, were like wild beasts.

"Let go this sorcerer!" screamed Widow Davide; "we have had enough of voices and visions and witchcraft. Let them believe who will that Jehannette d'Arc doth her great miracles of siege-raising by the help of the saints. We know this old beast hath long communicated with devils. He ought to be burned; but fagots are too good to waste on him—we will drown him in the Meuse."

Mengette put herself in front of Choux, who shrilled like a chicken with something in its neck. This spasmodic shriek, and his odor, and his prehensile, sucking grip, from which there was no escape, made her turn faint. With the ferocious self-preservation of age, he held her before him; and she felt his thumbs, which curved sharply backward with a claw at the end, sink their joints into her hips. His thick, bestial lower lip blubbered first at one side of her waist and then at the other, as he watched his antagonists. Mengette trembled.

"You have never been well liked yourself for harboring the old wretch," warned the Widow Davide's nephew, who had helped drag Choux.

"It matters not," answered Mengette.

"People despise you," declared the Widow Davide, hands on hips, and nose thrust into the maid's ghastly face.

"It matters not," answered Mengette.

"Let us have him, or we will throw you into the river with him."

"It matters not," answered Mengette, her tongue bound to one phrase; for she could not argue with them, or threaten them with the curé, or think of any good thing which might turn their minds. And there was old Simone of Greux, who could barely totter on two canes, licking his sunken mouth with fierce desire to slay, and shrilling, "Put them both in the Meuse!"

And there were the children who loved to stroke Mengette's milk-white gander, staring at her as at a cursed thing. She had early learned what is so hard for the young to learn, that many things must be endured alone. But there is no loneliness like isolation as the protector of an abhorrent object. Some of the excited villagers drew back, touched to their souls by her hunted eyes. The rest, provoked by resistance, with frenzied clamor dragged both Mengette and Choux to the deep washing-pool.

Choux's throat closed to sound, and his face extended long and horse-like in front of his ears. Mengette could see it, though his hold on her back was not broken, as she struggled against the hands of her executioners until her petticoat and bodice were torn to shreds. Her lithe body twisting and her arms beating in the midst of a crowd were seen by Jean Morel and Gerardin d'Épinal in their vineyards. They ran shouting at the top of their voices.

Men who had been farther than Châlons might not have prevailed at that time to stop unjust violence, but two dreadful things helped them—the sight of a

maid's naked, scratched arms and breast and dropping petticoat, and news from Greux that the priest had already passed Bermont chapel on the Bury-la-Côte road which led from Rheims.

The crowd fell apart. Every woman was ready to cover poor Mengette and take her home. They began to blame one another, and those who had only stood and looked on went into their houses with a virtuous air, determined that the priest should know they had nothing to do with it. Choux and sorcery were forgotten. They all wished to be standing by their doors, or driving in the cows, or to be bringing great innocent panniers of lucerne on their backs, or gathering home the children and the geese, when they welcomed the priest as he returned along Domremy street.

But before the angelus rang, nearly every soul, warned out by Father Fronte's command, gathered in the church. Choux was not there. He crouched in his chamber; and Valentin was not heard to whisper all that night. Mengette was not there. She lay in her cupboard bed, and though it was July, the serge-covered down sack lay over her feet, for twilight brought in the coolness of the hills. Isabel Romée sat beside her, too exalted to feel that bitterness against her neighbors for their behavior which she must have felt if she had not been to Rheims.

But Jacques and Jacquemine were in the dark church, where almost invisible sinners cowered on the prayer-benches. The terrors of that religion whose rights of trial and punishment they had usurped hung over a pastoral people unused to public ferment. The

Widow Davide knelt on the stone floor; she was often mourning her daughter there, and sank lower and lower in a contrite heap.

Two candles only lighted the altar. The curé came out of the sacristy, and taking one of them, ascended a pulpit near the center of the church, and set it on the reading-desk before him. White groins and arches were half discernible overhead. In one transept was an image of St. Catherine, and there Jehannette d'Arc used to pray. The priest led his people through a short benediction service, and then he said:

"I have heard all that you attempted to do this day to Choux, who is a sinner, and to Mengette, who would have perished a martyr. And why were you moved to it? I know your hearts, full of jealousy and envy. You were not mad against sorcery: you were mad against royal favor that hath not been shown to you. None of you have complained of any damage done to you by Choux; but when my back is turned you rise up to put him to death, and shamefully misuse an innocent maid, because of your spite and malice."

The church was very still. Jacquemine, in his place, felt fierce to punish these peasants who had not been to Rheims.

"I have been to Rheims," said Father Fronte. "I have seen our dauphin crowned a king; I have seen the pucelle, who grew up among us with holy visions in this valley, where some of you run to violence, stand before her sovereign to be questioned what she desired for all her services. She asked but one thing: 'Take the tax forever off Domremy and Greux.' The king

takes the burden of tax off Domremy and Greux. Your priest and Jacques d'Arc bring you the news. I have no more to say. Go home."

The congregation did not stir. Father Fronte also stood still in the little circle of candle-light. He could hear their labored breath. They all, like one great sorrowful child, burst into weeping, and wept aloud.

XI

ISABEL could hear that contrite noise in the church through Mengette's open door and windows. Both women understood it, but they continued their talk about Rheims. Isabel had brought home all the geese from the uplands, and given evening bread and drink to this prostrate family as well as her own. The hill twilight of home filled her heart to the brim. Mengette's slight outline was stretched in exhaustion under the down sack, which she drew to her armpits as the air grew cooler, her face shining white above it. The pot-hanger dangling from the back of her fireless chimney was lost in the dark, and both door and windows framed nothingness. She forgot her trouble in the splendor of a realized vision, which Isabel could not keep from painting on the Domremy night.

"So all hath been fulfilled. While we spun or sewed or worked in the vineyards, the months have changed Jehannette like many years. At first I did not know her in her armor. We all stood to see the king and his troops enter Rheims on Saturday evening, for he received his worthy anointing on Sunday;

and there was my child riding at his side with a white banner, so glorious a creature, the people so adoring her with cries and weeping, that I hid my face against a wall, and shook with a kind of palsy, and saw not her brother; he rode behind her. But when she came flying to the inn where we slept,—for she was lodged with the king's company at the archbishop's château, —and with her head bare cast herself into our arms, Jacques fainted down upon the floor. She kissed him and tended him. I could see she was our same Jehannette. She inquired for you, and named everybody in Domremy. Her heart was set on coming home with us, since her task was fulfilled at Rheims; but the king and all the army held to her with pleadings, and reproached her for desiring to turn back while the English are still in France."

"And Pierrelo, also—he was well?" put in Mengette.

"Well and ruddy, and all a soldier. Pierrelo hath become wasteful, living among nobles; but he paid into Jacques's hand the money which our horse brought in Tours, and more besides, from spoils and ransoms of the English. Jehannette will not take either spoils or ransoms, or money from the king, except to pay her household. The king would have given honors to both Jacques and Durand Laxart; but they would have nothing, so he made our Jacquemine bailiff of Vaucouleurs. Messire de Baudricourt hath joined the army with his retinue, and he and Durand were made to tell over and again the story of her setting out for France. Durand Laxart boasted a thousand times, 'And I carried her to Vaucouleurs!' wandering around the fair streets, beside himself and laughing aloud.

Jehannette gave him her old bodice and petticoat that she hath carried with her on all her journeys, having no longer hope of wearing them again. And he sat with the things across his knees, and looked at her in her mail, the tears running down his face, the king himself having said that no man had done more for France than Durand Laxart.

"The king hath a pleasing, fair presence, and he is but four years older than Jacquemine. He kept his vigil in the cathedral all Saturday night, as the custom hath ever been on a sovereign's last night before coronation; and outside in the great square were crowds rejoicing. All night long, also, the workmen hung banners and tapestries and cloth of gold, and there were chimes like thousands of bells ringing together."

"Does that great cathedral where the kings are crowned seem to be more than a church?"

"Outwardly it is like a carven cliff of stone, and took my breath from my throat at the first sight. Within, when a few voices chant, the sound swells until an army seems chanting; but when an army doth chant, the mighty rolling volume is like nothing I shall hear again on this earth. Also, there were wheels in wheels of tinted light shedding glory. The pillars are set up as they would support the sky, and all our family could sit on the base of one. Besides these seats around the pillars, three rows of stone benches are formed by the rise of the walls above the pavement.

"Then there was the procession of the Sainte Ampoule containing the holy oil, which an angel brought from heaven for anointing our kings. Priests carried it under a canopy—a little round flask the size of my

thumb, but larger about the bottom and shoulders, and smaller about the middle and top, all crusted with red and green gems, with a stopper of gold. Out of this did the archbishop anoint the king on his head, his shoulders, within the joints of his arms and the palms of his hands, slits being cut and embroidered in his robe to this use. It was all done according to ancient custom. And then did two nobles lift the crowned king in his chair, and show him to the people. He was proclaimed, and chimes and voices and music of instruments rolled in the arches; and I, being with Jacques within the choir, could see my child stand on the lowest step of the high altar with her banner. Oh, Mengette, I am the happiest woman in France, whatever comes of all this, for it is clear I am the mother of a deliverer; but it was at first hard for me to believe that St. Michael stooped to our garden, and St. Catherine and St. Margaret continually instructed her."

"You believe it now, godmother?"

"Have I not seen with my own eyes the things resulting therefrom? They are more wonderful to me than the coming of saints."

Before next dawn Mengette was crossing the moist, dark lane to milk her godmother's cows, knowing that Isabel would be weary from the journey. It was not light enough to see artichokes standing stiff like huge green dahlias in the village gardens, or even to distinguish poppies thick in little squares of wheat, their crimson heads embroidering the yellow mass; but all hidden sweetness was on the air, and the smell of the yellow linden flowers was a complete delight. Thus the sleeping Domremy, the dew-reeking, half-seen,

natural Domremy, made up to Mengette for the cruelty of its inhabitants. She did not wish to meet a living soul, and was seeking her work in the end of the night to avoid the earliest risers; for Mengette had wild instincts, and felt the scratches on her outraged breast branding her with disgrace. That her neighbors had been called to public rebuke and public repentance made no difference to her. She hated no one, but she desired to make a retreat from the world, and it was fortunate that Gerardin d'Épinal had hired her to work in his vineyard that day.

The D'Arc house was not built to shelter its own cattle, like other cottages, but had a thatched stone stable beyond its garden. Oxen and cows, brought carefully in to repose for the night under shelter, sighed their content in the darkness; and Mengette, as she entered, made haste to say, "God and St. Bridget bless you!" so the cows would not kick over the milk.

She shivered with the lonesome chilliness of early morning; but at mid-forenoon the warm land glowed about her, a fervid breath rising from the earth. When Mengette had employment, her geese were obliged to remain shut up in their own end of the house, quavering as if their nostril-holes scented the delicious summer landscape outside; for Choux avoided that common employment of old people and children, and would not lead a goose out to graze.

When all laborers paused for the mid-forenoon meal, Jacquemine d'Arc came among the low vines searching for Mengette. She did not stand up until he detected her bare head above her strange clothes; for,

her every-day wear being shredded to rags, she was obliged to fall back on her mother's chest.

Jacquemine was in his best, and he chose his way like a magistrate, so that Gerardin d'Épinal at the other side of the vineyard, whose experience as a traveler was considerable, might feel his new dignity. Gerardin chuckled in his piece of loaf as he crunched it with hard teeth, and silently prophesied about the people of Vaucouleurs, and their submission to a bailiff like Jacquemine d'Arc. "He will go in with a strut and a bellow, like a little bull of the Vosges," laughed Gerardin; "and come out over the wall, tossed by bigger horns than his own. Bertrand de Poulengy is of no greater stature than Jacquemine, yet he doth fill the eye like a man, while this creature might as well be a bush, so little regard have people to his humors. Doubtless the king laughed in his royal sleeve at his new bailiff; but Vaucouleurs will count it an ungracious return for sending him the pucelle."

Some regret for the hard-working maid who was bound by contract to Jacquemine also glanced through the peasant's mind. "She could make a better marriage," he reflected, "particularly now, while such indignation is felt for her; but even the pucelle cannot turn this poor brother into a husband to be desired of any maid."

"I am going to Vaucouleurs," was Jacquemine's greeting.

Mengette remembered when his father had spoken the same words, and he had afterward accused Jehannette of disgracing the family. She looked up quickly

from the knife and lump of bread in her hands, and he was shrewd to perceive her thoughts.

"Because the king made me bailiff of Vaucouleurs when I was in Rheims," he said, coloring helplessly, "I did not on that account stint speaking the truth to my sister. I told her plainly the people here in Domremy said she raised sieges by witchcraft."

Mengette's sunburnt cheeks whitened, and she looked down. She had no spirit left. His words did not dispraise the people of Domremy, but she blamed him little; he was himself happy. The elfish naughtiness of this lad whom she had helped to rear, his spites and frank self-love and jealousies, had always touched her pity; but the shock which her traditions had received unsettled her even toward Jacquemine. She wished she had hid herself at Bermont spring instead of coming to work in the vineyard.

"Will you stay in Vaucouleurs?"

"I shall live there. A bailiff is not like a captain of a town, who may live where he pleases; but he must set up his house among the people he governs. I am no fool," said Jacquemine, with a twist of his foxy head. "This great ha-hu of Jehannette's may not last. My brother Jean will get wind of it at Vauthon, and his wife's family will urge him to make his profit out of it; but I am the eldest, and the first honor is by right offered to me. Bailiffs are not bailiffs merely to amuse themselves. I intend to squeeze Vaucouleurs."

"What was done for Pierrelo?"

"Oh—Pierre—he hath everything like a great noble. You should see him caracole on a horse. And he

hath put on clothes and armor that swell his person to increased bigness. 'La! I am the brother of the pucelle!'—that is all his thought. Doubtless he told the dukes and captains she had no elder brother, for they knew nothing about me."

"I would I could see him and Jehannette."

Jacquemine's sandy eyebrows drew together with resentment.

"It is plain you are not glad to see me, and Durand Laxart's horse stands saddled ready for me while I climb up hither to set a day for our marriage. The bailiff of Vaucouleurs can marry when he pleases. We are no longer obliged to wait until Choux's death."

To Mengette, whose world was scarcely a league square, such a translation to new spheres was blinding.

"Oh, Jacquemine," she cried out with a rush of joy, "I now want to leave Domremy."

"It is soon arranged. There is Henri Royer in Vaucouleurs, who is well disposed toward us, and will help me to seek a suitable house. A bailiff is not to be lodged as common peasants lodge. I saw in Rheims in what excellent regard the citizens of the three estates are held. There are in this realm three ranks called the three estates, Mengette—the clergy, the barons and knights, and the citizens."

"But what will your father do for help in his fields?"

"He will be obliged to hire a laborer. When he loses me he will lose a son indeed; but both my father and mother have spoken of the marriage. They see it will be necessary, and I have remained the last of their children."

"How will Choux be received in Vaucouleurs, Jacquemine?"

"Choux will stay where he is. He can still sleep in your house, and my mother can feed him."

Mengette thought about it. The lifting of her life-long burden brought a deep breath of relief from her bosom; but the old custom, the old discomfort, the old duty, which her father had told her death alone could free her from, were drawn back with her next inhalation.

"No; I must not throw the care of him upon any one else."

"He shall not go to Vaucouleurs—I will tell you that."

"Then I must stay in Domremy, and still feed and shelter him."

"Do you love old Choux?"

Mengette covered her face with one arm, and shuddered.

"Why, then, do you hold by him?"

Her eyes, as she opposed her lover, took again the hunted look.

"There is a pitying, Jacquemine, which is like religion. I cannot disregard it; happiness would turn to a curse."

"Do you choose to stay here with him, working in the fields, rather than to go with me?"

"I cannot choose, Jacquemine; it was all settled without my choosing."

He flung his nervous body a few steps from her, and looked back. "Then it is adieu between us."

"Jacquemine, you came up here to quarrel with

me. You scarce gave me a good day or a kiss on the cheek, and there was only Gerardin, who knows how long we have been betrothed. You were not like this before the king made you bailiff of Vaucouleurs; but it is true, I am not fit for your wife."

She turned to her work, and he came back. They faced each other for more words, when Choux appeared, carrying his hump less lightly than before its bruising, to take his share of the forenoon meal from his feeder. The stealthy odor of him crept within the vine fragrance, and Jacquemine looked at him over one shoulder, and gave him the field.

Mengette yielded her knife and lump of bread to the old creature. The chief member of her foster family, the one through whom she had hoped for relatives and happiness, stalked on down hill, without again looking back, to claim for himself dignities and honors, and left her for life to this degraded company. Choux made little noises of satisfaction over his food, grunts and smacks of the palate, bestial, unlike the honest grinding and hearty human enjoyment of a peasant.

Mengette hid herself among the vines as far as she could from him, and knelt there, doubling her body forward, and weeping upon her knees.

XII

"POTON DE XANTRAILLES is love-lorn," said La Hire, with a wink at his friend's back; for the tall knight mounted and rode off to St. Denis without waiting for him. La Hire's own courser was held ready by a page, but he lingered, spreading himself and his cloak upon a chair, and holding a cup in his fist on the table where he had been drinking. He sat before the door of his quarters in the crowded lane of La Chapelle, which was then a small faubourg outside the ramparts of Paris. There was a stretch of fields to the city walls on the southern horizon.

"Since Poton hath been appointed governor of Coucy his mind runs to serious things,—mass and confession,—so that he hath no longer any stomach for good company. Take warning by Poton, Messire d'Arc, and let thoughts of women alone. La Hire never looks at a woman," said the old sinner, rolling his eyes behind his chair, where Pierre could see a red petticoat half concealed by his wide cloak.

"What have we in La Chapelle or St. Denis to make a man love-lorn, Messire La Hire?" the pucelle's

brother asked, laughing. He knew well whose black eyes snapped near the knight's broad shoulder. Though women of her class were forbidden the camp, he had many times seen Haumette Davide, gorgeous from a summer among Burgundians, slip about behind his sister's back. And he had talked with her, half in contempt and half in pity, loving the familiar sound of the whistling Domremy "oui," which is like "whist!"

Pierre sat his horse with drawn rein for the pastime of enjoying La Hire's embarrassment. But he added in seriousness:

"Messire de Xantrailles is only cast down like the rest of us because we are kept idle in camp."

The knight struck the table until his wine-flask staggered.

"We ought to take Paris to-morrow. By my baton, La Hire is tired of this. The king and La Trémouille have sat in St. Denis a week, holding the pucelle in leash, bemoaning the expenses of an army they keep idle; while the Duke of Bedford in Paris laughs at them, having a hundred and twenty thousand livres tournois a month to his revenue drawn from France."

In his excitement La Hire raised and shook his arm, twitching the cloak farther off Haumette. Her reminder caused his face to fall into sudden distortion, and he arranged his draperies in haste; but in serious conference with the soldier Pierre forgot to be amused by the bacchanal. He looked through a passage left between houses at meadows sweeping away to the Seine, which, after cleaving Paris, makes a bend northward. He could not see the distant river, but all the

fields were spread with September glory of pale-pink and pale-blue crocuses, star-cloth, a prodigal carpet for mailed feet and trundling artillery and the chafing of coursers' hoofs. Pierre could smell, above the barnyard odors of this stone village crowded with many horses, a piece of wild mignonette he had stuck in his corselet because it reminded him of Domremy. There the little brownish-yellow blossom twinkled all summer, overclothing the sward in every direction.

"Messire La Hire, is La Trémouille part English?"

"No; but he is wholly bad French. Hark ye, my lad, who was Georges La Trémouille before the king took him up? Nothing but a dependent of the Duc de Richemont, and for being placed at court by that noble he hath bred enmity betwixt his patron and the king. He had a sister married to a low Scot little better than a stable-boy. You remember," cried La Hire, with pleasure in bringing the facts to Pierre's own experience, "the little maid that embroidered the pucelle's standard in Tours?"

Pierre did remember her, to the roots of his hair. He sat his horse, helplessly detected in a feeling which La Hire had not the eyes to see.

"That was the Scotchman's daughter, the child of La Trémouille's sister. She hath been left on his hands by the Scotch painter's death since we marched from Rheims."

"Who brought news of the Scotch painter's death, messire?"

"A messenger from the queen to the king, that I myself saw in St. Denis yesterday. His name—"

"But where now is the demoiselle?"

"Oh, she is with her grandmother in Loches; and the favorite's elder sister, De Beuil's wife, hath already stirred herself to tie the young calf to the royal crib. The Scotch demoiselle is now our queen's new maid of honor. Bring in all nations," blustered La Hire. "France is meat for every crow on earth. By my baton, if God Almighty came down to France in these days, he would turn robber like the rest!"

Pierre felt strong need to slap La Hire's red face, where unshaven hairs bristled with general aggressiveness; but taking up the glove for the La Trémouille family against his friend was such madness that he put himself beyond another word by spurring off suddenly for St. Denis. Charles had appointed a council to consider an attack on Paris,—the king was not slack in holding councils,—and Pierre's duty was to attend the pucelle.

"It is time La Hire himself took to horse," declared the knight, in a flurry of haste, bouncing around on his chair. "Come out now, minion; drink your wine, and begone. Do you want to give a godly fellow a bad name in the camp? The pucelle herself might ride by if it were not for the council in St. Denis."

"What care I for the pucelle?" scoffed Haumette, resuming her seat on the table, and filling the cup she had carried into hiding. "Did I not know her in Domremy? She is no better than I am. Must I lie perdu whenever the D'Arc family make a procession? No, by my faith! The Davides are as good as they are."

"Ho!" cried the knight, starting up and seizing her by the shoulders. "Down again, Haumette! Squat, toad!—yonder comes the pucelle."

"Let her squat before me," retorted Haumette, holding stubbornly to the table.

"But it is the pucelle."

"I also," said Haumette, defiantly—"I am a pucelle of Domremy. There be two of us, Messire Broadback."

La Hire's face became dinted all over, as if every fat pore opened its mouth in consternation. "Oh, get thee behind me, Sathan! By all the batons in Christendom, see the minion flaunt!"

He snatched his cloak and bolted into the house out of sight. Haumette sprang upon the table. Her wide-featured, snapping-eyed beauty took on unspeakable insolence. "Bring here the horse," she commanded La Hire's page; and not being hindered by his master, he led it to the table, and Haumette bestrode it. The courser reared, but the page still held its huge iron bit, restraining its power, while she with the bridle directed its course.

Jeanne came riding beside the king from the direction of Paris, where they had been inspecting the ramparts, with a small escort. Her face was marked by weariness and discouragement. She wore instead of her helmet a hat with turned-up brim cut in battlements which encircled her forehead like a crown. Wind and sun had taken away some of her whiteness, and anguish was growing in the hazel eyes from royal inertia; but she was a divine sight, which men remembered, and afterward described according to their diverse spirits.

The triumphal march of that glorious summer which had given back to their king Soissons, Château-Thierry, Compiègne, and many another town, with

wide stretches of northern country, which had terrified the Duke of Bedford from Paris to Normandy, and back again to Paris, and had drained new levies of men from England, was now to be wholly lost or wholly consummated by its ending at Paris. The regent had been cautious about risking decisive battle, but Charles had outdone his invaders, so that English and French armies only touched in a skirmish near Baron, by Senlis. "Paris," said the Duke of Bedford, "is the key of France." And Charles seemed loath to stretch out his hand and seize the key of his realm. He could not advantageously use what was in loyalty given to him, while the Regent of England, in order to carry on war, was strong-handed enough to lay a tax even on the small pay of his soldiers.

All the hopelessness of Jeanne's colossal task took physical shape in a woman of the camp shocking against her with an ill-guided and struggling courser. She looked up from her saddle-bow at an impudent face defying her even to cleanse the troops. Her eyebrows drew together, her nostrils quivered, her hand brought up the sword of Fierbois like a flash, and smote it flat across Haumette Davide's back. The blade parted in two. One piece fell under the feet of La Hire's horse, and Jeanne stared silently at what remained on the hilt in her hand.

"By my faith!" said Charles, reddening with displeasure, "you have broken the sword of Fierbois on a camp-follower. Are there no cudgels in La Chapelle?"

She heard whispers behind her and outcries in the houses. The maid had broken her miraculous sword; it was a bad omen! La Hire's page picked up the

fragment, still holding the snorting courser on which Haumette Davide clung and cowered; and Jeanne tried to fit the parts together. The camp armorer came running, but he shook his head at the sight. Those old blades which could be bent around the body—the making of them was a lost art, and the mending of them was an art yet undiscovered.

Jeanne left the sword in his hands without a second look. Her eyes dwelt on the creature she had struck. It was not her instant recognition or piteous repentance which pierced Haumette Davide. Nor was it her blinding greatness that made the depraved one crouch before her. It was some nameless power, some revealing of light from another world.

When Jeanne d'Arc had passed on, Haumette slipped from the horse and crept to a secluded place where she could sit on one of the cylindrical stones bestowed at wall sides to keep wheels from chafing.

"I wish she had run me through with her sword," said Haumette; "it would be too good for such as I am, but her sword would not be hurt."

Next day Paris was assaulted. At night the maid was brought by a rabble of troops wounded into La Chapelle, having met her first defeat. It was like a rout, where no knight could collect his retinue, and horses clashed harness with one another in the low evening light coming across level plains. The young Duc d'Alençon was beside her. She rode with her head on her breast, unconscious that one mailed foot occasionally dripped blood through the clumsy iron stirrup.

Jeanne's victories had been culminations of effort.

When the French flagged after long fighting, and their enemies also relaxed effort, then the spirit seemed to come mightily upon her. At early morning assault was made on the Porte St. Honoré, and lasted until evening. Straining with all her might, Jeanne yet waited for that certain sign that Paris was given to her, when the king and La Trémouille sounded a retreat. It was then twilight. Jeanne, without heeding the trumpet, led on in the midst of din and crash. Two knights, being sent for the purpose, seized her and forced her upon her horse. "En nom Dé, we are about to go in," pleaded the struggling pucelle. But the tide of retreat had set out, and it carried her along.

"Take this not to heart," urged D'Alençon, leaning toward her. "We will try Paris on another side. What do you think of the bridge of boats across the Seine at St. Denis? You shall see Paris nearer than you have yet seen it, and by the left bank, though we ride far to strike where a stroke is least expected."

"The bridge of boats was well planned; but, fair duke," said Jeanne, throwing up her vizor, and showing the deep lights of her eyes to this companion in arms, "the city was ours this night. We should have gone in through the breach we had made. It was almost taken."

"A night's rest and comforting of the bolt-wound in your foot will not come amiss. Without waiting on councils, we will take our people and dash across to a new attack at dawn. If your wound proves too sore, send me instant word by your page, pucelle."

"The wound shall not hinder me; I scarce knew I

had it until they pulled me from the breach. We will ride early, fair duke, and that must be a loud trumpet that recalls us to-morrow."

She was ready to laugh, with the prospect of directly renewing the assault. And the La Chapelle woman in whose house and bedchamber she slept rose astonished, in the dark of the morning, to bring her the bread and watered wine on which she broke her fast. A young maid with a pierced foot in bandages and oil, she dressed in haste like joy itself, to go out through fog across a bridge of boats, to be shot at again by all the archers of Paris!

Bertrand de Poulengy came with her armor, and as he drew the straps with practised fingers she promised him relief.

"We will take Paris to-day, Bertrand; and afterward, by exchange of prisoners, we must get poor D'Aulon back. You have had double labor since he fell into the hands of the English at Baron. I grieve for poor D'Aulon."

"I also," said Bertrand, with gentle irony—"I grieve for poor D'Aulon."

"I do esteem him, Bertrand."

"I also," said Bertrand. "As soon as the English had him my esteem rose. If they will only keep him, I shall in time love him like a brother."

Jeanne glanced over her shoulder at her squire, who was diligent with her buckles.

"Indeed, D'Aulon never grieved me. But I have done myself more discomfort than any other has ever done me, by breaking the sword of Fierbois. It can never be mended. Oh, Bertrand, I did not come to the

wars to break the sword of Fierbois on poor Haumette Davide!"

"Let it go, and heed it not," said the squire, bringing her belt with a strong sword which she had taken the day before at the Porte St. Honoré. "Here is one that answers as well to give good blows and clouts with."

She had herself thrown the long-sleeved levite over her mail, and as he knelt with her girdle, her unusually piteous face broke him down in his vow. He seized her hands and kissed them, and trembled with uncontrollable passion. The touch of her was so sweet to him, and ease from his long self-restraint was so blessed, that he held her with strength until she wrenched herself loose, throwing him forward upon his palms.

The squire stood up and faced her, his blue eyes dauntless with the rage of his love. Jeanne turned her back on him.

"I will go to Haumette Davide," spoke Bertrand. "She is at least a woman. She will speak a word of pity to a wretch that has not had his torment eased in three long years. My faith, as well as the sword of Fierbois, shall be broken on Haumette Davide!"

He flung himself into the humid dawn, where fog trailed like wet threads in La Chapelle street between his face and the face of Louis de Coutes, who held Jeanne's courser.

The page gave little heed to the squire. Holding the bridles of war-horse and palfrey, he waited in haggard excitement to deliver news to the maid. Jeanne brought out her casque, which Bertrand had left un-

laced, for Louis de Coutes to carry behind her on his saddle-bow. The squire was nowhere to be seen, and even Pierre failed to attend her. The low sky trailed on roofs, and drops of humidity began at once to dim her mail like an overcoating of minute beads.

"The Duc d'Alençon and Messire Pierre d'Arc have both gone to St. Denis," said the page, without waiting for her inquiry.

"They are in haste, but by hard riding we shall overtake them. Are the troops all stirring?"

Louis stood bareheaded before her. The hair curled around his neck. "Pucelle, they went to the king. They bade me tell you the bridge of boats is cut adrift. No one can now cross to attack Paris."

"When was this thing done?"

"Last night."

"By whose command?"

"The king's."

Jeanne's face stiffened; but she said directly: "The bridge of boats—en nom Dé, let it go; we can enter elsewhere than by the bridge of boats. We shall go in by the breach made yesterday at Porte St. Honoré. Why has the duke gone to the king? He should be riding down hither with his troops. Mount, and after him! I think the men are all mad this morning. We have no time for councils and visits of ceremony."

"But, pucelle," disclosed the page, "King Charles has ordered a retreat from Paris."

The stern maid put her attendant on his defense.

"Am I to believe this story? Who left St. Denis in the night with such commands from the king?"

"His Majesty's own herald. And there was haste;

but you were not to be roused from sleep. The Duc d'Alençon rode off to St. Denis to inquire into the matter, and he himself sent you word that the bridge of boats is cut adrift."

"The king has ordered a retreat from Paris?"

"It is the truth, pucelle."

Jeanne put her arm on her courser's neck, and leaned with all the weight of her mail. She gasped as if some one had struck her in the breast; and Louis de Coutes, forced to be purveyor of this cruelty, was ready to curse his sovereign. Yet the courtier's instinct to make his own advantage out of another's discomfiture was boldly alert in his look. He was sorry for the military leader, but he was fiercely glad the woman had met a rebuff which might make her kind. The boy's eyes filled with honest tears, and he slid to his knees, holding the bridles in his arm.

"Oh, my great mistress, I am of good family. Look not on me as your horse-boy. By our Lady, I can hold back no longer! I shall soon be knighted, and no woman need then despise me as a husband."

"Stand up!" said Jeanne. "Have you no regard for your hose, furnished by a poor king who has just been forced to throw away Paris?"

"If I stand up at no kinder bidding, it will be to lay your squire low."

"Go to the king, Louis de Coutes, and tell him I now have no need of a page. Ask him any favor he can do you for my sake. We shall part at St. Denis."

The enraged boy followed her as she took her own bridle from him to mount. "I will not be turned off like a varlet!" His large, light eyes and loose lips

and the thick tip of his nose seemed distended by aggressiveness.

But he knew he had banished himself from the maid, and her reserve, as she looked down from the saddle, chilled him and sealed his mouth. She thanked him for his service, commended him again to the king, and rode off. Louis de Coutes struck the earth-stains on his shins, and glanced at neighboring windows. La Chapelle was stirring in the sullen dawn. He could do nothing but mount his palfrey and follow at a distance, debarred from his page's duties.

Early as it was, the abbey of St. Denis, where the king lodged, showed preparations for departure. Charles carried with him such luxuries as he could, and he never for any military consideration omitted a dinner or a night's rest. But he was as near eagerness as his phlegmatic nature ever approached to be done with the campaign and on the southward road.

To retreat from the capital without taking it at that time meant to disband the army. Officers and their retinues signed indentures of service for a specified number of months, and without reënlistment they could not even go into winter quarters to be at the disposal of the sovereign, though many knights and nobles, among them La Hire, De Xantrailles, and the Duc d'Alençon, would retire into the north to hold towns and fortresses.

Seldom had so much been done by loyal subjects for an impoverished monarch. The pucelle herself had acted as his treasurer, husbanding his means to the utmost, and holding the retinues of his captains so devoted to her that they would have served for noth-

ing but their bread. Those northern cities that had returned to their allegiance needed the protection of the capital. Charles left them to shift for themselves. Master of Paris, where the Duke of Burgundy was the most popular man in the kingdom, he might have treated successfully with that alienated vassal.

The west door of the cathedral of St. Denis opened from a mean street crowded with many little shops. Jeanne entered it lame-footed, coming from her interview with the king, about the middle of the forenoon. Within she sat down on the steps which form a short terrace to a vast expanse of floor. Opposite, far away, stood the great altar bearing up a gold Christ between two tall candles. Echoes resounded in the Gothic arches from a service in one of the chapels. Jeanne set her helmet, which she still carried, on the floor beside her, a polished head-piece, like the top of a knight embedded in stone.

The king had commanded her to follow him to Bourges. Already the retreat from Paris was begun, though it would have to be covered by troops, and La Chapelle and St. Denis would not be entirely evacuated for several days. She leaned her face on her hands, too sore in body and spirit to creep down for a prayer before the nearest altar. A tardy sun was beginning to make glimmers through the clerestory windows high above.

Her enemies, of whom she had scarcely thought in the ardor of war and fatigue of many marches, now pressed her in defeat, and seemed to follow her under the arches of St. Denis. The Regent of England and the Duke of Burgundy Jeanne left out of account. They

were to be met in open field. But there was La Trémouille, covert and mocking, a man who had never been earnest in anything except the pursuit of his own pleasure. He had done as much to bring the campaign to naught as if he held secret league with the English. La Trémouille had also prevented the queen from journeying to Rheims, thus robbing her of coronation. And there was La Trémouille's friend, the Count-Bishop of Beauvais, who had some little quarrel against her concerning horses bought of him by her household, and perhaps a larger hatred for that most unreasonable of all reasons—jealousy of power. Moreover, there was the Archbishop of Rheims, the favorite's brother, who had taken that same strange attitude toward her. "En nom Dé!" whispered Jeanne, "if they thought more of the king's dignity, and less of their own, it would be the better for France."

But there, also, were her friends, scores, thousands, men, women, children, stout knights and nobles and men-at-arms. Answering the silent roll-call of her need, one of them entered the cathedral. The inner door swung shut behind him. He was, like herself, all armed except his head, and carried a plumed hat in his hand when he saw her. The knight who had refused to follow her standard at Orléans was first to seek her in defeat at St. Denis.

The maid's eyes met his in a long gaze of sorrow. He stooped to one knee to talk with her. Their low voices did not spread from one little circle of sound in the echoing cathedral.

"Has anything further befallen us, Messire de Gamaches?"

"No, pucelle. I come to beg that there be no adieus betwixt us two."

"Why, we must all part, Messire de Gamaches. But I tell you, and I have been informed truly, however it may go with you and me, there will not be an Englishman left on the soil of France within seven years."

"God send there be no favorites left, either. Do you desire to follow the king?"

"I would far rather go home and tend my sheep, messire, which you would have had me do at Orléans!"

"You do not forget that I rebelled against following your standard before it had led us to so many victories?"

"I remember you offered me your horse when I took my first wound."

"Not my horse alone, but my lands and myself I am ready to offer you now. Pucelle, I am of good family, though scarce your equal in arms."

"Messire de Gamaches, there be plenty of women in France for wives. You may easily choose among them; I never saw a more accomplished knight. But I was born to other uses. The king had best employ my time, for it will not be long."

"I have a regard for you, pucelle, that I have for no other, man or woman. We have been captains together, and I had liefer be commanded by you than by any other. When you take the field again I will follow your standard."

"Messire, you have given me the only comfort I have had this day. When the king has so many good men ready in his hand, how can he disperse them? But it is the favorite's doing."

"Yes, the apricots like little red apples will be past

their season in Bourges, if La Trémouille makes no haste to disband the army. I have heard him mourn the loss of them, together with his ease."

"Yet he tilted well by Senlis, messire."

"A man must sometimes shiver a lance, or age will come on him in his youth. Pucelle, I am loath to let you go south to yonder court."

Jeanne gave him both her hands in farewell. Their gauntlets met with a metallic sound. She thought, "When shall I see such goodly arrays of men gathered again?" Her eyes swam, her chin quivered. As these companions in arms had met, so they parted, with a long look of sorrow. The closing door swung silently behind De Gamaches, and Jeanne limped slowly down the steps, helmet in hand.

No more would that casque lead like a star in assaults. It had been broken by a stone at Jargeau. She traced the closed seam which an armorer had skilfully made.

One old woman with kerchief-bound head, and a wrinkled man in blue smock, knelt at their prayers. Pattering with unceasing lips, they watched the glittering figure, already loved in St. Denis, pass along the cathedral wall. Jeanne felt her wound to faintness as she descended to the crypt under this church, where all the kings of France, from Dagobert, were buried. Low stone galleries wound about vaults and chapels in which the great gray coffins were enshrined. Charles had given up these as well as his capital to the enemy. She dragged her foot along the stone path, or leaned her forehead against the side of a cold arch. The crypt was deadly chill.

Another mailed tread followed her, and she saw

Poton de Xantrailles coming, tall and well-thewed, thin-faced and sharp-eyed, but downcast, as though he bent his head to escape the top of the crypt. Like all the captains, he was ready harnessed, for a general attack on Paris had been intended by way of the bridge of boats.

Jeanne felt her heart unendurably swelling toward the scattering army. De Xantrailles, with the gentle manners of courts, controlled himself, and gave her first a message from the king, who would know, since she had dismissed her page, young Louis de Coutes, if she desired to have Louis's brother Raymond instead.

"En nom Dé," answered Jeanne, "let me have no more of the De Coutes family." She laughed. "The knights are dispersing, and Paris is thrown away, and we must take thought only of pages. But understand well, I do not blame my king, Messire de Xantrailles."

He stood high above the maid. His vizor was lifted. De Xantrailles had witnessed the glories of the court of Burgundy—a duchy that outdid many kingdoms in splendor, where tournaments were oftener celebrated than anywhere else in Christendom, and chivalry, instead of falling to decay, was at its height. But loyalty which excused the lax relinquishment of a kingdom he had not often seen.

"Have you heard the cause of this sudden retreat?" he inquired.

"No, messire."

"Charles has just completed making a truce with the Duke of Burgundy until Easter."

"The only truce with the Duke of Burgundy should

be made at the point of a lance! He showed his sovereign nothing but contempt when a message was sent from Rheims beseeching him to throw in his lot with his people. The English only desire to use him."

"You had scarce left the king, pucelle, when a knight came riding from Paris with sixty followers to join the royal party. He says the city was never so ready to yield. But we have made truce with Burgundy, so we go home."

Tears, always ready in Jeanne from childhood, gushed down the oval cheeks. She turned and sobbed against the wall. Oh, it was bitter to be ruined at the goal by a courtier's misgovernment!

"Jeanne," said De Xantrailles, trembling in the voice, "I am appointed governor of Coucy, the strongest fortress in France. I am of good family."

The maid drew her breath sharply at these ominous words.

"I will demand you of your brother Pierre, and also of the king, as any maid should be demanded. Come with me to Coucy. The wife of De Xantrailles may at least live apart from a court ruled by the favorite."

"En nom Dé, what ails these men?" cried Jeanne. "Have you all agreed to take pity on a poor scourge of England because she is thrown aside, and house her since she has no field for her arms? But I know why you come to me with tears in your eyes, thinking comfort may be found in marriage. It is the cry of France rending every one of us."

She set her casque on the floor, and took him by both gauntlets, as she had taken that other good knight, De Gamaches. Her companion in arms worshiped her

silently, without daring to draw her nearer his mailed body.

As if she could not bear any further words of parting from captains who felt this general bereavement as she felt it, Jeanne snatched up her helmet, and limped away from De Xantrailles along the crypt.

Behind the choir of St. Denis, and back of the great altar, was a little chapel to the Virgin. Bertrand de Poulengy was kneeling there. He heard a halting step behind him, and turned and saw the maid. With her eyes fixed on the statue, she began to unbuckle her armor. Exhausted and ghastly, and struggling with her unaccustomed task, she yielded him back his office of squire without a word of reproach, standing in the stained light which poured over her from high windows.

"I went to Haumette Davide," he whispered to the maid. "She is going home to her mother with De Metz of Novelopont, when he has taken leave of you. Will you call me D'Aulon hereafter—the squire who never caused you any discomfort? Let me take his place while he is a prisoner."

"I have no longer need of squire or armor," answered Jeanne; "yet I cannot well do without you."

"That is enough for me."

"You are fit to approach this altar?"

"I am not unfit."

The squire helped her carry all the pieces of her armor and place them about the feet of the statue. Jeanne knelt, and lifted her sword by the blade in both hands, with the cross-hilt over her head.

"My virgin armor I sacrifice and offer here upon this altar. It is the cry of France!"

XIII

"LITTLE king of Bourges" though Charles VII was called by his enemies, he had no palace there, and was obliged to use the château of his uncle, the Duc de Berri, who retired for the winter to another outside the walls. The château of Bourges was a wide, stately pile of stone, blackened instead of bleached by age, seated among threading streets and crowding houses, halfway up a slope of land at the top of which stood St. Étienne's cathedral. Common soldiers and attendants entered the château from the street below by a court opening into guard-rooms. But the Chevalier du Lys turned in at one of the great gates which, standing opposite, made a crossing street of the paved court fronting the palace.

Pages were always hastening up or down the stone steps, and horses waiting in the court, except at this hour when night fell and candle-light began to glimmer. A torch burned at each side of the steps, struggling with foggy air, and the stones were slippery with hardening moisture under the chevalier's feet. He passed through half-deserted antechambers,—for at

dusk the king still sat at table,—and through long vaulted corridors to the great hall where the court assembled for its evening diversions. Sconced candles were already lighted along the pillared walls, and logs roared in the chimney. It was a mighty chimney, carved all around with stone oak-leaves. Half a dozen knights could have spurred into it, elbow to elbow, without grazing their casques on the top. Its swelling breast withdrew upward to a many-timbered ceiling. And there the firelight twinkled on polished joists, while below it spread a river of shine along the floor, partially bridged by three figures in front of the hearth.

The chevalier saw that they were his sister and the young demoiselles Agnes Sorel and Madeleine Power. They did not see him. Even Jeanne was dwarfed by the size of the great room. His heart gave a leap, and, uncertain whether he should enter while they three talked by themselves, he stood at the door holding his hat in his hand. The beauty of Agnes Sorel when wrath stirred her was like coruscating light. But he paid no attention to her or to what she said. He looked at Madeleine Power. As soon as the Chevalier du Lys had received his patent of nobility, supported by a grant of land near Orléans, and had ceased to be called Pierre d'Arc, he asked one more favor of the king, without which the first two were thrown away upon him. But he was made to understand that La Trémouille had already contracted the demoiselle Power in a suitable alliance.

Jeanne and Madeleine stood with their arms around each other. All of Agnes's hair was drawn up from

her clear forehead under a hennin, and her cheeks burned scarlet with excitement.

"This hour a thing hath been said to me," exclaimed Agnes, with a pretty catch of her breath as she spoke, which was nobody's but Agnes Sorel's, "such as never should be said to maid by the mother-in-law of a king."

"But Queen Yolande is very good-natured," Madeleine objected. "I never heard her speak amiss."

"Oh, her Majesty of Sicily intends me high honor, no doubt. But I was not brought up in a court. We are better nurtured at Loches."

"What did she say?" inquired Jeanne, seeing the statecraft of Queen Yolande, and her latest attempt to juggle troops and men out of nothing for the siege of La Charité after the dispersion of the army.

"I will not tell you. It was an insult also to my king. Only a year ago so eager was I to come to court that I could scarce wait until my kinswoman resigned her place to me. And now I am sick to my soul of base creatures trying to ruin their sovereign before all Christendom. Any woman would set what wit she had against it. Look not over-conscious, demoiselle; we do not choose our relations in this world."

"I never chose any but my father," returned Madeleine.

"Poor child, you will choose no more, shut up in the queen's nunnery apartments. Oh, if I were Queen of France I would come out of seclusion, and no other woman should share with me the rousing of the king."

"He is wedded to Bourges and Sully," said Jeanne, wistfully looking at the fire. "The sight of Paris should have roused him."

Agnes Sorel laughed.

"Pucelle, I believe you see nothing in this court but the length and strength of men's legs and arms idling out of armor. Aside from war, you are as simple as an infant."

The Chevalier du Lys heard this as he stood aside bowing deeply to let the king pass, and he knew it was so. Many soft-shod feet trod the pavement as the crowd of courtiers flocked after the king, who leaned on La Trémouille's arm. Silks and satins shone lustrously, nor were slashed sleeves wanting, to show robes of linen underneath. Pierre had heard De Xantrailles say that linen, and especially clean linen, was a luxury everywhere in France, except at the court of Burgundy.

He fell into the tide of human presences. Charles's household soon gave themselves up to the newly invented diversion of card-playing. The queen had a religious dislike of what she called idle bits of paper, and absented herself from the salon where the game was nightly played. Marie of Anjou, though an unusually compliant wife in many ways, had not the sympathetic breadth of her mother, Queen Yolande, who dealt with zest and fluttering hands, relaxing a mind filled with schemes for establishing the throne of France.

Little ceremony was observed; Charles demanded none of the worship which his cousin of Burgundy exacted. Seated at many small tables, with many small piles of coin at stake, the courtiers filled the room with hum of voices and laughter. Alan Chartier, the court poet, wandered from table to table, as it was his

custom to do, holding a lute in the curve of his arm. The king had Agnes Sorel for his partner, and La Trémouille and his queen's latest maid of honor for his opponents. La Trémouille wasted no attentions on his niece, and Madeleine was first seen in hall that night after her winter of mourning. She learned her part doubtfully. Pierre could see her eyebrows drawing together. She lifted her black eyes and met his gaze with silent greeting, and this was all the greeting they two had been allowed since he came to Bourges. In his comings and goings from his lodgings in the street Trois Pommes, a little place near the city wall, and in the cathedral and palace corridors, he had watched for glimpses of Madeleine. Yet even at the lax court of Bourges she was so celled and restricted that he saw her only at a distance. After the rejection of his suit he had gladly followed his sister from court in her brief restricted campaign eastward. The Chevalier du Lys felt how alien his sister and he were with their new patent of nobility.

If Charles had concluded a treaty with the King of Scotland for help in his wars, it would have cost him the duchy of Berri or the county of Evreux. Jeanne d'Arc had cost him nothing, and was a greater terror to his foes, and with her thrifty peasant hand had doled his war funds to the uttermost advantage. The least he could do for her was to rank her among nobles, so a patent was conferred on her and all her family. The heralds made her a coat of arms, giving her the masculine shield instead of the feminine lozenge, and the device of the crown upheld on the point of her sword between royal fleurs-de-lis. Du Lys was the new name

of her family. But she made no change in her banner, and said to the heralds, "I remain Jeanne d'Arc. My father's name is good enough for me, though my brothers may like the other."

During this dreary winter of her chained inactivity, a woman named Catherine of Rochelle came to court with visions; and there was news of a shepherd boy in the mountains who promised to do for the king what Jeanne had undertaken, and to do it better. The favorite also bestirred himself, and found employment which would take the maid out of his sight for a while. She was sent to take St. Pierre-le-Moustier, southeast of Bourges, which she took as by miracle, and La Charité, northward, which was so strongly fortified with watch-towers as to resist a siege. Bourges engaged her octrois, and Orléans also sent her succors, says a chronicle, but the court provided nothing. The ground was frozen hard, slippery with frost, and showers of crystals filled the air like diamond-dust. Jeanne was glad to have armor again upon her body, though it was an ill-fitting suit obtained from the Duc de Berri, and glad to be afield and see the sun describe his little arc in the south. But La Charité had to be abandoned. Once her spirit rose beyond control, and she rode, with her squire and her brother and a few attendants, to Orléans and Jargeau and Montfauçon. There the people still thought of France. But she heard what almost slew her. The state of the country was now worse than it had been before she took up arms. Invaders and robbers were alike made bold by Charles's withdrawal from the north; and the English forced exile or death on defenseless people who would

not forswear their loyalty. Whole villages stood tenantless, the inhabitants having journeyed into other countries. Pestilence also followed the long famine. Everywhere the earth, rank with centuries of foul accumulations, yielded up their odor to dampness. It was told her that wolves prowled even in Paris, that skeletons of children lay on dunghills, and the cry of wandering wretches could be heard in the night—"I am dying of cold and hunger!" Yet Paris was then the pleasantest city in France, with covered bridges and orchards, vineyards and towered fortresses. The Bastille stood among trees. That winter trenches were cut and bodies laid in the ground like corded wood.

Pierre could see the intrigues around him. He knew that Queen Yolande constantly threw Agnes Sorel in the king's way, and that the Queen of France was resigned to desperate measures against La Trémouille. He saw the eyes of that young maid of honor, defiant against her pursuer, yet melting constantly in helpless tenderness upon the king. He saw and enjoyed the jealous rage of La Trémouille, who brought counter-forces to bear in a war suited to a favorite's talents; and many another hand-to-hand encounter Pierre could see betwixt courtiers sleepy-eyed with dissipation.

But Jeanne saw nothing. Whenever she came into hall, a supple, noble figure, her rapt gaze moving from face to face, she was a rebuke, being above all martial glory the maid, virgin in mind and person, the maid of France.

"Why should the paschal lamb be paraded?" was

spitefully said behind her back. "Turn it out again to its native grass."

"Oh, Jeanne d'Arc!" a courtier would groan to some face within the screen of a fan. "La-la! I am so sick of this pucelle. She can take pleasure in no human pursuit, but must be praying or riding and fighting. A lover would be more to the purpose at her age, but she will not even make love. The king might amuse himself better with a dwarf."

Yet the maid laughed in fellowship and without bitterness when she came back flushed from St. Pierre-le-Moustier, or from rushing through the winter air on her courser. Her face was not sad, but it wore the puzzled look of one constrained to waste on lower things a space of time given for robust action. Housing and trivial amusements were hard for her to endure, when the pulse of France was again reviving in the north.

Jeanne remained leaning against the chimney, being left out when tables were set for cards. She was richly dressed, as the king required her to be, wearing over the fine cloth of her chevalier's costume a crimson-velvet levite. The long, loose sleeves almost covered her hands, on one of which she wore the ring her father had given her at Rheims. A lean child like a wolf stood near, and watched her with sharp eyes, seeming to measure her capacity for war, and sagely to appreciate her as one of the engines for extending his future kingdom. A servant of the queen's bedchamber did reverent battle with him to draw him from this spectacle for the night. But he escaped out of this person's hands with slippery ease, and roved at will among the tables.

Then Alan Chartier approached, playing softly on the lute he carried a chanson which Jeanne remembered. She met his eyes quickly. The court poet was this winter too often at her heels; yet she had sympathy with him, as one seeking also for expression, and sometimes falling into great sadness with life.

"What will you do with me, pucelle?" asked Alan Chartier, making accompaniment to his words on the lute-strings. "You have got a mastery over me that grows from day to day."

"God be praised for that," laughed Jeanne. "I have, then, at least one man-at-arms."

"There is a woman soul in me, and in you there is the soul of a man. Will you put me to the further disadvantage of suing for your love?"

"Nenni," answered Jeanne, using the strong peasant negative. "That I will not, messire."

"The pucelle hath just received a declaration from Alan Chartier," remarked Agnes Sorel to Charles. "He plays that purring tune when his affections are about to make a spring."

"Jumps the cat that way?" responded the king, glancing up the room. His stunted dauphin, the wolf-like child, crept behind Agnes, and tweaked hairs on her white neck below the hennin.

"It was merely the Dauphin Louis amusing himself," said a smiling dame at the next table to her, as she recoiled in pain.

"If the nurse does not remove that boy, I trust God may!" Agnes responded; and Charles himself laughed. But she caught a gentle caution from the smooth-shaven, clear-cut face of Jacques Cœur, the silversmith

of Bourges, whose many favors to the king gave him access at any time to court. His friendly smile checked her impatience with a child to whose making had gone a mad grandfather and a corrupt and selfish grandmother.

Pierre dealt his cards indifferently. He had been shoved beside the wall to fill a table far from Madeleine Power, and cared little whether he won or lost coin. He could perceive what was befalling Agnes Sorel in spite of her strict bringing up; and with the complete rebellion of youth, he declared to himself that happiness bought at any price was better than such misery as his. Madeleine Power had never thought of him. She was promised in marriage to another man whose name he could not learn. And after he had watched for her with heart-sick patience so many months, she glanced at him once, as at any varlet.

The evening waxing later, card-tables were put aside for dancing, and Pierre followed his sister into the upper corridors of the palace. Jeanne also had lodged in the street Trois Pommes, and afterward with the wife of Jacques Cœur; but this being the eve of the court's departure to Sully, she slept in the palace. They walked in silence, both having lost the fresh joy of life, until Pierre opened the door of a small tower chamber which Jeanne shared with a maid of honor. She kissed him on his cheeks, and said:

"Good night, Pierrelo. Be early in the saddle. Sully-sur-Loire is the château of La Trémouille; but at least we go toward Compiègne, where I have reason to believe our people may now be fighting."

"You saw the demoiselle Paure in the hall, Jehannette?"

"Yes; both before and after the king entered."

"Does the queen go to Sully?"

"The queen goes, but Madeleine Paure does not."

Hatred of Sully that instant entered Pierre.

"I love her as if she were our Catherine, Pierrelo. But put all thoughts of marriage out of your head until France is better at ease."

"Since no marriage is made for me, how can I do otherwise?"

"I did my best for thee, Pierrelo, though it is a marvel to me how men can desire to wed when they have no country. But here in this court they think of nothing but lute-playing and the talk of lovers. Are there not enough starving families now in France without founding more?"

"Jehannette, in some ways you do not grow at all, but remain a child."

"That part of me which does not grow is not needed," reflected Jeanne.

"But why does the demoiselle Paure remain here, if the queen goes to Sully?" inquired Pierre, desiring to find some excuse for remaining himself.

"She does not remain here. She goes to Loches, where her family are about to celebrate her marriage."

Pierre turned sick. "Who is the man, Jehannette?"

"Young Louis de Coutes!" Jeanne smiled in the face of his misery. "That froward lad, my page. But he is of good family, as he himself assured me; one of the richest in Touraine, the demoiselle Agnes says, and the king will early knight him for good services."

"Louis de Coutes! No wonder her family were close-mouthed with the bridegroom's name. A boy

—a scribe fellow that wrote your letters and set down your accounts!"

"He is mine own age, Pierrelo, and much older in nobility than a chevalier called Du Lys."

"He shall not have her! Doth she like this marriage, Jehannette?"

"I did not ask her," answered Jeanne, with such candor that the miserable chevalier smiled.

"That insolent Louis de Coutes who drew sword against Bertrand at St. Denis!"

"Did he so?"

Pierre sent the whistling Domremy yes betwixt his lips. "And Bertrand gave him the wound that has kept him out of court this winter, while his family arrange for him this marriage. Louis de Coutes hath despite against us."

"If it had not been Louis de Coutes, it had been some other man not a peasant from the march of Lorraine. We could not hope that the favorite would make any alliance with us. I have caused a letter to be sent to Tours asking that five hundred livres tournois be voted by the city to the marriage portion of Messire Paure's daughter. He painted my banner. It is the only reward I have ever asked for my services to France, except the lifting of the tax from Domremy."

A candle in the chamber shone on Pierre, showing his hardening face, which had matured since the wind along the Meuse blew rings of hair over his forehead. The tan of a military summer was cleared from his lovable features by partial housing. A reckless look sprang into his gray eyes.

"I will not care. It shall be nothing to me."

"Oh, Pierrelo, I wish we could go home!"

Pierre gave her a sidewise glance. "But what would we do in Domremy now, Jehannette? For me, it is my wish to go where La Hire and De Xantrailles and the Duc d'Alençon are. I would see some more fighting."

Jeanne herself laughed eagerly. "Has Bertrand made all our preparations for the journey to-morrow?"

"He forgets nothing. I left him polishing your old mail."

Pierre kissed his sister on both her cheeks, bade her good night again, and turned to leave the palace.

A few torches were fastened along the stone walls, overlaying with a new smear of blackness the breath of past torches as chill drafts of air flowed by. His echoing steps brought him nearer the staircase, and there Madeleine Power met him, running up from the hall below. They both paused and looked at each other, and Pierre knew she had come on purpose to intercept him. He heard the music. A wave of color carried the hardness from his face, and left it pliant with all that a man cannot say. To see her so near at hand was to be enthralled into forgetting what had happened and what might come.

This demoiselle in court dress was more a woman than the maid in her mother's old clothes at Loches, or the peasant who carried water from St. Martin's well. Pierre looked his last on her black eyes and bright hair. Madeleine was made small and perfect like an ivory miniature. A perfume sweet as linden flowers went with her, conquering the rankness of the torches.

"Chevalier du Lys, I have something which belongs to you, and I would not return it by any other hand than my own."

Pierre felt the old palace strike cold through him as he remembered the horse-money at Tours. There were the coins showing through the silk netting of a new purse. His voice and hands shook, but he made a doubtful face over his examination of it.

"This does not belong to me, demoiselle."

"You have forgotten, but I have not. You dropped a bag in my pannier at Tours. At first I thought it was a miracle of the blessed St. Martin; but when my father heard about you he knew better."

"If St. Martin parted his cloak to a miserable beggar, would he fail of gifts to pilgrims?"

"St. Martin gave only at need, chevalier. He knew my mother's family would not let my father and me starve."

"Do you want me to take this purse?"

"It is clear the money is yours."

"Then keep it as a peasant's offering to his lady's marriage."

Her face fell. She looked at the hilt of his sword.

"It is ungentle to remind me of marriage."

"I have been told that your marriage is soon to be celebrated."

"There is much, chevalier, that I would like to ask your advice about. My father said you were a man to be trusted. But you have avoided me ever since you came to court."

"Avoided you, demoiselle? I have watched for you every day."

"If you had watched for me you must have found some way to show me kindness. I have no friend now, chevalier. With the exception of the pucelle, there is no woman I love at court, and I see her seldom. No one in the world has need of me as my father had."

The innocent child who had walked with him into St. Martin's cave, holding to his hand because the place was dark, looked at him again through the eyes of this maid of honor. He could hear his own heart pounding, and the rival with whom her marriage was to be celebrated passed out of his mind.

"Demoiselle Madeleine, I myself have such need of you that I swear to be your bachelor for life. Because my proposals were thought unfit for you, that shall make no difference with me."

"You made proposals for me, chevalier? When did you make proposals?" Her face was white and haughty. It disturbed Pierre, but he answered with hardihood:

"As soon as I was raised to a rank which made the proposals possible."

"My family refused them?"

"Your family refused them."

Madeleine heard her aunt De Beuil ascending the staircase behind her on almost silent feet. She had expected to be followed as soon as she was missed. But she looked at Pierre with a swift and silent and hopeless acknowledgment.

Long after she had been walked in disgrace to the queen's apartments through the tunnel-like corridors of the palace, he stood leaning against the wall, stupe-

fied by unreasonable joy, and trying to recall the flash which had fallen upon him.

His mind went no further than that look, and he wrapped himself in the thought of it when he passed out through the palace gates.

There were few lights in the close-built town, on hillocks or in valleys where roofs pressed together. Pierre glanced up at the Roman towers where Jacques Cœur's new château was to be founded. No wonder the king loved Bourges. How pleasant and hospitable was the province of Berri! There had been a forecasting in his mind that, in spite of all drawbacks, some good awaited him in Berri.

XIV

THE May afternoon was waning in Compiègne. It had been a golden day for the north provinces at that season of the year, and the city was put in a joyful stir by the coming of the pucelle. She had arrived at dawn, with about five hundred men, from Crépy, and entered on the south side, unseen by the besiegers on the north. Splendidly mounted and equipped, her saddle-cloth made of cloth of gold, a crimson levite belted over her armor, her standard displayed, she cantered with her troops toward the bridge gate; for it had been concerted with the Captain of Compiègne that she should strike and surprise the Burgundians at Margny before the sun went down, cutting off the farther camp of Claroix from the English at Venette.

It was not the first time the maid had been seen in Compiègne since Easter. In April, when English captains were about to embark fresh troops for France, they refused to go. "The witch is out again," they declared to their angry officers. "It is true she hath not been seen in the north since autumn; but soldiers have this feeling only when she is afield." They de-

serted in crowds. Beating and imprisonment had no effect on them. Only those who could not escape were forced on board.

Then the Duke of Bedford heard the maid was actually at Melun, and had helped the inhabitants drive out the English garrison. As swiftly, she was at Lagny-sur-Marne, striking English marauders. She had leaped again into the field, for there had never been any truce with the invaders, and Charles's truce with the Duke of Burgundy expired at Easter. The French were renewing their struggle without the king. The Bastard of Orléans, who had been made Count Dunois, was pushing, with the Duc d'Alençon, toward St. Denis. At first it was told in terrified Paris that the maid was coming to renew her attack. She certainly attempted, both by Soissons and Pont-l'Eveque, to break her way southward. But Compiègne, the most important town of northern France, often besieged and harried by the invaders, holding fast to its loyalty, was at this time threatened by both Burgundians and English. The French captains flocked to the maid. The Duke of Bedford at once issued a proclamation against soldiers and officers who should "be terrified by the enchantments of this pucelle."

Her squire and the Chevalier du Lys, her brother, knew with what force she had sprung into the field. They rode alone with her out of Sully-sur-Loire without the king's knowledge or consent, a few needful things strapped behind their high saddle-backs. It was a three-days' ride to Melun across rough country and up the long ridge of Fontainebleau forest. Pierre thought with hatred of Sully-sur-Loire, the most in-

hospitable place in France—a many-towered castle, with pointed roofs, and curtains of stone, rising from a river-like moat. It stood beside the Loire; but how dreary was the great river at Sully, running deep along the high bank, and spreading far off in shallows, seeming to cut France off from the north!

At Sully, Pierre had watched day after day in vain for Madeleine Power. The morning the court left Bourges he was early afoot, determined to press his suit again; but a page wearing the De Beuil livery came to him with a message for the pucelle. The demoiselle Power sent word that her marriage was to be postponed, and she was to join the court at Sully. So easy was it for Pierre to believe what was told him that he suspected no trick, until La Trémouille's insolent hospitality, which made every mouthful of bread bitter, forced the truth upon him. Madeleine Power was not brought to Sully, and he heard no more of her. He thought of dashing out by himself to Loches. But if he were there, what had he to offer a demoiselle who had merely looked at him? Should he carry her off by violence?

"Pierrelo," Jeanne once said to him, "do you remember the huge red snails around Bermont spring? They must be creeping forth; and all the Meuse valley is quickening with green. I cannot stay here idling any longer, where we are not wanted, and so little time remains to me."

"God he knoweth I have no stomach for this place," answered Pierre, "and less care what becomes of me now, so I go free of it." What lonelier spot was there in France than this old village of worm-eaten carved

timbers, clustering around a feudal stronghold? And how delicious was the forest of Fontainebleau after Sully-sur-Loire!

The second night the three riders came to a deep oval valley in the forest, a vast cup of white and gray rock. Sunset was behind as they descended into the gorge, a pink flame mounting the sky sparkles upon sparkles, the rosy smoke sweeping the zenith. And when they had picked their way across, and ascended to the opposite forest level, there, in sand as soft as ashes, rock turned to dust without grain, stood ruined walls which they knew to be the ancient abbey of Franchard, to which a peasant had directed them as a landmark. There was enough roof to shelter them for the night. They heard the bubblings of nightingales; and near them were moss-crusted elms dropping finger-tips of branches almost to the ground, white-pillared, forming cathedral naves in the forest; white birch, pine, and oaks; hills and dales of springing fern. Jeanne closed her eyes, thinking how near also was Paris; and Bertrand closed his, contented to be anywhere with her.

To Bertrand this was the happy spring of his life. He felt riding to heaven alone with her, for Pierre was moody, and lagged. She had grown so accustomed to his tendance that there was communion between them without talk. He had her to himself, depending on his presence, while the English began to feel the coming terror. She told him before she told Pierre that her voices had warned her she was to be taken prisoner before St. John's day. Always reticent in speaking about this unseen counsel, she sometimes turned a startled face

toward Bertrand as they rode. Her lips parted; her lifted eyes filled with light. He held his breath.

This twenty-third day of May in Compiègne his nearness to her was incredibly crowned. Jeanne and Pierre and Bertrand took the sacrament in the church of St. Jacques at the morning mass, kneeling in the fifth small chapel from the entrance, on the right-hand side of the church. As they passed into the aisle it happened that the bells began to chime. Bertrand and Jeanne both lifted their faces. Did he hear a faint tone of some unearthly voice—a sweet, still articulation under the clamor?

Jeanne leaned, pallid, against a pillar opposite the chapel. The paneled and flower-carven wood, supporting shorter stone pillars near the clerestory, threw her face into relief. At once the early worshipers in St. Jacques's church drew toward her smiling, and some of them secretly touched her. Bertrand had seen her stand godmother to many a baby during her campaigns, and every boy that she held was christened Charles, for the king.

"My friends," spoke out Jeanne, "I am soon to be taken and sold into captivity, and then I can never again have it in my power to help France and the king. Pray for me."

Bertrand remembered what awe struck through the listening faces. But the people of Compiègne could not think of such forecasting when the pucelle rode out to make her attack on Margny.

"Did you know," Bertrand inquired, as he helped her mount, "this Captain of Compiègne was appointed to his post by favor of La Trémouille?"

The maid looked startled at her squire. "No, I did not. But for the honor of France he is bound to support us in this sally. En nom Dé, if I thought I should be taken at this time I would not go out. God grant I may perish when I am taken, for it is far easier to trust my soul to him than my body to the English. But St. Jean's day is a month distant, and we must do all we can."

Poton de Xantrailles rode beside her, and the setting sun shone on the left side of their faces as they galloped over the lowered drawbridge and the rosy Oise, where archers were taking to boats to support the attack from the river.

The Oise flows southwestward, and Compiègne is on the left bank. A fortified bridge then joined it to the northeast shore, where defensive works were further guarded by a deep foss. Over this a stationary bridge was built, and it seemed the entrance to a high causeway stretching across the marshy meadows. In the north, bounding the wet land, was a low range of hills. Straight ahead, beyond the causeway, could be seen the church tower of Margny, a third of a league from Compiègne, and there lay the Burgundian camp she meant to strike. Beyond that, and at twice the distance, was Clairoix, the second Burgundian camp, which she meant, by this quick blow at an unexpected hour, to cut off from the English camp at Venette, a half-league to the west of her route.

The archers in the boats saluted the pucelle as the armor of her troops flashed across the Oise bridge. Five hundred strong, the attacking party took at speed the long line of the causeway. A little lower and a

little ruddier, the level-lying sun touched the walls of Compiègne and the great forest lying behind them. It promised to be a pleasant May twilight, clear and fair. The waiting bowmen laughed and talked to one another, even after the noise of combat reached them from Margny. The pucelle would doubtless bring in many prisoners. The Duke of Burgundy was himself said to be at Clairoix, and a surprised duke would he be when he found himself suddenly cut off from his allies at Venette.

People on the walls of Compiègne could see what the archers at the river level could not see. Venette was aroused by the clamor in Margny. English troops were streaming out to attack the French rear. Gunners on the walls made haste to train cannon which they dared not fire, and the silenced archers in the boats made ready shafts which they dare not discharge. For back came French and English together, pell-mell, crowding the causeway, pushed off into the marsh, a fighting, struggling mass, the Burgundians of Margny pressing behind; and the Captain of Compiègne did nothing.

The archers, unable to shoot without wounding their friends, gathered refugees into the boats. Alarm-bells were rung in the city; men and women ran to the open gates. The pucelle and her body-guard could be seen covering the rear of her panic-stricken troops. Now she rode back and lashed the pursuers, and now she turned to rally her own soldiers. Her brother and her squire and De Xantrailles, the one captain who never left her, pressing around her, fought with desperate courage. Shouts and the clang of weapons seemed to

fill that little sunset world. The entrance to the Oise bridge was wedged with struggling bodies, and horses trampled their own dying riders. The pucelle, when she could no longer cover her troops, conspicuous in her crimson garment, was seen to make a dash for the marshes. Surrounded by Burgundians, she was dragged from her plunging horse by her robe, and yells upon yells of triumph drowned the noise of battle. The pucelle was taken! It would be shouted long after nightfall at Clairoix by drunken soldiers, and repeated with joyful derision from camp to camp. The witch was caught. Trumpets which usually called to arms shrieked discordant fanfares over this great prisoner. Captains taken with her counted as nothing; they might easily ransom themselves. But the witch of the Armagnacs, worth more than the ransom of a king,—the terror of England,—was at last a captive, dragged off to the Burgundian camp. The Duke of Burgundy would that very hour send out despatches bearing the news to the regent and all Christendom.

Men and women of Compiègne ran struggling across the Oise bridge, as the mob of soldiers cleared away, to fall with any weapon on the rear of their retreating foes. What did English and Burgundians care at that moment for Compiègne? They had done enough that great day. The inspired maid was taken!.

It was four days afterward that Jeanne turned in her saddle to watch that dear town of Compiègne grow less in the distance, as she rode among her captors northward along the course of the Oise. A score of men-at-arms guarded her, and wherever a device appeared on their housings, it was the rampant two-tailed

lion of Burgundy. Wooded hills lay along the horizon at their left, and at their right, in the low ground, flowed the pleasant Oise.

Jeanne could not speak to her squire, for he was held in charge by troopers at the rear; but she took comfort from the thought, "We are prisoners to the Burgundians, not to the English. While the Lord of Luxembourg, a vassal of the Duke of Burgundy, holds us to ransom, it might be worse with us."

Pierre and De Xantrailles were yet in the camp at Clairoix, lightly wounded. She hoped she was not going far from them; but late in the day the cavalcade passed Noyon, winding among the path-like streets of the ancient gray town. Huge white oxen, yoked by the horns in many pairs, were crowded to the walls to let them go by. The people of Noyon ran to look at the captive pucelle paraded to their sight; and some were sorrowful, while others, having it in mind to stand well with Burgundy, shouted as she rode with her head bowed. Charlemagne had been crowned in Noyon.

Bertrand noticed with dull attention the carved beam-ends and oaken cross-pieces in house-fronts, and the little leaded windows. Beyond Noyon he made a landmark of every windmill standing with spread arms against the fading sky. Neither Jeanne nor he had given their parole not to escape; but there was small hope of escape. Both were mounted on poor horses, the refuse of the camp.

The moist May night closed over half-desolate fields as they turned westward into a path lined with no villages and no lights. Remote and lonely exile waited behind unknown horizons. It grew chill, and the jaded

horses lagged until they heard the barking of a dog. A cluster of houses where no fires burned skirted the way. Then a moat showed its livid water on the right hand, as the party mounted a short ascent and turned into an orchard.

"What place is this?" inquired Bertrand of his guards.

"This is the tower of Beaulieu."

"I see no tower."

But as they drew nearer to a drawbridge he saw its low top against the sky. It was a round tower of brick, at one end of a long dusky château. The only lights came through two south windows of this tower. The cavalcade called impatient curses on the keeper before the gates were opened. Bertrand noticed, as they rode across the lowered drawbridge, which came down creaking on its unused chains to meet them, an oblong hole in the bricks, about three feet above the water in the moat, made noticeable by shine reflected from a wall within.

One old man held up a candle in the brick-paved court, where the horses were crowded against one another, so near was the opposite wall, and he smiled without teeth at the liberal abuse he received as he locked the gates under the archway again.

Thought Bertrand, "This does not seem a strong place."

"Now, Messire d'Aulon," said the captain of the escort, using the name which Bertrand had given at his capture, "you will do your last service to the maid, and disarm her."

The servants of the party led away the horses,

Jeanne was already in the tower, and her squire followed her. She had been stripped in camp of her crimson levite, her courser, and cloth-of-gold saddle-housings, but the Lord of Luxembourg, her captor, had allowed her to remain in her armor, according to her custom among men in the field.

Many spurs jingled on the paved floor, and as soon as the jailer had turned a huge key behind the prisoner, her escort, taking candles, and bidding him bring them firing and supper in fewer minutes than it had required to open the gates, trooped through another door into the château.

Opposite this door in the tower was a high, shallow fireplace with an oven beside it. On the pot-hanger hung a seething kettle. The lazy blaze and the old man's candle showed brown timbers and many cross-pieces hung with cobwebs overhead, flooring the concave of the tower, and roofing the circular walls. A table, a bench, a kind of lair which could not be called a bed, and some cooking-vessels, were all the furniture.

Jeanne stood spreading her hands before the blaze while Bertrand knelt to unbuckle her mail. Her supple body drooped. He did not let himself say, "This is the last time I shall take off her harness," but his fingers fondled every strap. The cleft between her lower lip and chin seemed more deeply indented than ever, and her eyes were weary. She was recalling the dark face and broad-tipped nose of Philip of Burgundy, surnamed the Good, whom her king in youth had offended with deadly offense. Her usual distrust of him, which the magnificent man in black velvet had courteously shaken by a few words of pride in her,—being French

himself, and unable to repress them,—had begun to revive. She was prisoner to Burgundy's vassal; but would he stand between her and the English?

The old man, trotting from side to side of the tower, paused with his back and hands laden as Bertrand said to him sternly:

"Before you carry fire or food to rough men-at-arms, your duty is to the pucelle. For this unmannerly treatment of such a prisoner your Lord of Luxembourg will hold you to account."

Opening and shutting his mouth with indecision, the jailer put down his loads, and dipped broth from his kettle, and put wine and bread on the table, taking them from a kind of buttery within the château door. He pacified with high-pitched voice impatient calls for his service ringing through empty rooms beyond.

"Where is the pucelle to lodge?" asked the squire, laying down the last piece of her armor.

The old man beckoned, and trotted with his candle down three steps at the left side of the chimney, Jeanne and Bertrand following. He thrust the light beside an iron-clamped oaken door over three steps at right angles to the first descent, showing behind the fireplace a vaulted cell, about six feet high and nine feet long and less than three feet wide. They could hear the lapping of the moat through that slit in the wall which Bertrand had noticed as he crossed the drawbridge, and which let in all the air a prisoner could hope for when the door was shut and locked. The floor was stone. The farther end of the cell was concave.

"I have lain hard many a time," said Jeanne, laugh-

ing, "but never before was I put to sleep in a tomb."

"The pucelle is not to be lodged in this dungeon?"

Her keeper nodded.

"Let me lie here," entreated Bertrand. "There must be better places in a château for a noble maid."

"You, messire?" chuckled the old man. "Who cares to hold you? That is simply a matter of ransom between you and your captor. But this is the witch of the Armagnacs."

"Have you no fear of her?"

The jailer shook his head hardily. "I am a Christian man."

"I have known men who called themselves so, yet they durst not move hand or foot when they would approach her," whispered the squire at the old man's ear as he ascended the steps behind that disturbed servitor.

The men-at-arms were by this time clamoring in such wrath that he seized his loads again and ran through the château rooms.

"Quick!" whispered Bertrand, holding the bowl of broth to Jeanne. She understood him, and swallowed. He put some pieces of bread in his pouch while she drank. The jailer's steps had not passed out of hearing, on resounding floors within, when both prisoners were outside, locking the door behind them.

They turned toward the front of the château, for there seemed no way except this. So habitually had Jeanne let herself be guided by others, since the warning of capture had followed her, that she took no thought but Bertrand's, and stooped as he did, running

under the windows. Damp greenness, gathered on the outlines of old bricks, came to their nostrils. A wall bounded them on the left, and it turned at right angles on a walk which led to a gate at the top of a terrace. The gate was fast, but it was low, and both scrambled over it. A high balustrade of brick with a coping of stone guarded one side of the stairs; a wall guarded the other.

They were feeling their way downward into the moist darkness when Bertrand turned and caught Jeanne's hands. He saw the dim guards below, but they had also seen him. Shouts of warders, oaths, and the rattle of swords leaping from scabbards drove them back over the gate. The front of the château flashed with candles, and men dropped from the low windows.

The prisoners, grasped by many hands, faced each other in one look before they were separated. All Bertrand's patience and faithfulness and self-restraint, and his sympathy like a discerning god's, the maid owned and blessed as she lost them. The dungeon closed upon her. She heard no sound but the lapping of the moat.

XV

THE Old World's reek, a stench left by death and ignorance and sudden flight, met a party of knights and men-at-arms at the entrance of a village. Coucy Castle could yet be seen in the wooded world behind them. The village was empty, and as silent as the withered bush hanging in front of what had been the wine-shop. No dog barked at the cavalcade, and the late afternoon sun probed desolate houses through the open doors. But deserted villages were common in northern France. This one was intersected by a road coming from the west, and at its junction with the road from Coucy the men drew rein and screened themselves by the church wall. Two archers dismounted, and went along the bending street, stooping to examine marks in the dust.

"English," said one of them, pointing with his bow end at many hoof-prints having a triangular shape. Horseshoes made in France were round, but the English horseshoes had a broader base of iron, forming a triangle in the center.

"Here be the tracks left by Messire du Lys's troop,"

said the other archer, and they went back with their information.

Both captains pushed up their pointed vizors, showing disturbed faces. "By my baton," swore the broad-backed knight, "if the pucelle's guards have escaped us, Poton, La Hire will curse thee as no fit man to lead a sortie."

"What have these shoe-prints to do with the pucelle's guards?" returned De Xantrailles. "Her guards are Burgundians, the vassals of Luxembourg. Mounted on English-shod coursers they may be; but by this token there is more than one troop to meet, and the Chevalier du Lys will find himself hard pressed on the north road."

"What certain information have you that the pucelle is to be removed from Beaulieu tower at this time?"

"It is not a far cry from Beaulieu to Coucy. The place hath been watched for me nearly three months, and I know that Luxembourg is about to carry her to his château of Beaurevoir in the north. It hath a strong high tower. If you had come to my help sooner we might have broken into Beaulieu."

"Come to thy help sooner? Had not La Hire enough to do to hold his own town of Louviers, in the very teeth of Rouen, where the English have their stronghold?"

"And not a coin didst thou send to my ransom," continued De Xantrailles, his wrath gathering. "By hardship did I get free, for I never made myself rich with pillage, and the country is destroyed, as thou dost see, around Coucy. The pucelle's ransom I could not

pay, but I sent a messenger at once to the king showing her state. It was only this month that I was able to exchange some prisoners I had taken for her brother and her squire; and they added the churchman, Brother Pasquerel, her confessor, who, since he is also ordained to priestly offices, my mother hath employed at Coucy. By St. Martin, I have been too poor this summer to pay for mass and candles."

"Is La Hire rich himself? In running this venture he hath scarce a coin in his strong box stored against need. And Louviers is a slippery holding, while Coucy is impregnable, only to be taken by surprise. And against all counsel thou didst leave it open to surprise, with so few warders, when we rode away."

"Since Compiègne I have few warders to leave. By St. Martin, I cannot make men-at-arms."

"And if thou couldst, they were better patterned on another than thyself."

"I wish I had the making of thee over," said De Xantrailles, savagely. "I would not use a damned atom of thy old substance."

La Hire sat stiff, a head and shoulders below his friend, and glared at De Xantrailles.

"What hath La Hire ever seen in Poton de Xantrailles to love?"

"A well-made man, one able to sit down without holding a great lapful of bowels."

"Well made, thou sayest? Can a man call himself well made who knows not hunger from the backache?"

Having reached this pitch of disagreement, both knights laughed in the hollows of their casques. Their

retinues, accustomed to the pair, kept guard, and watched around the church wall for the approach of the pucelle.

"Where is the young Chevalier du Lys, that he was not left in charge of Coucy?"

"Have I not told thee many times I sent him out with part of my retinue to watch the northern road from Beaulieu, while we take the southern?"

"If La Hire had reached Coucy in time, that had been better ordered."

"Who made thee captain over me, Étienne de Vignolles?"

"God Almighty," shouted La Hire, standing up in his stirrups. "He gave thee length of legs and arms, but no head; for saith he to himself, 'The fool will lose it. Let us make it a separate member, and call it La Hire.'"

"Fat-witted I was never called before," sneered Poton de Xantrailles. "It doth cut me to the heart."

"Whoever doth cut thee to the heart will find no blood on his knife," retorted La Hire. "Where is Bertrand de Poulengy? Did you send the squire also with the chevalier?"

"Since I must read you the tale of all my men, Bertrand de Poulengy hath been my spy on Beaulieu since he came to Coucy, and it is he that I now expect to give me warning of the maid's approach. He hath a good horse under him."

"That was not ill planned."

"God be praised," said Poton de Xantrailles, "that one device at least was not ill planned."

"Yea; amen; though La Hire dreads winning by

this ride a bed that will cool him after the fever in Louviers."

"In God's name, if you were laid low with a fever, La Hire, why have you let me accuse you?"

"To ease thee, Poton, to ease thee. It was the wound taken with Louviers. All flesh is not the flesh of the pucelle, that closes in four or five days."

"Well, then, a truce to words between us. It put me in a rage to ride alone, when we have fought elbow to elbow so long."

"Slit La Hire's tongue if he has offended thee, Poton. Thou art the bride and the son of a ruffian, but the ruffian loves thee."

"I am but half a knight without you," acknowledged De Xantrailles. "If you had been at Compiègne the pucelle had not been taken."

"La Hire is no amulet to keep off evil; but whatever befalls at Coucy, his hand is in thine."

They embraced each other as well as they could in armor and on horseback, and swore that this should be their first and last tilt with words. Their retinues, who had heard many first and last tilts with words, smiled idly, and pulled leaves to chew, or struck at floating mosquitos. The horses moved restless feet, for time was passing; and the sun shone horizontally across the village, throwing longer shadows with the stone houses on unplanted fields.

Its light dazzled the men's eyes, and they drew their lids together, watching through slits for the cavalcade on which they intended to pounce. Some of them had ridden with their masters to Rheims, and they remembered the pucelle's compassion on the French prisoners

at Troyes. She would not permit the English garrison to carry them away. So intently had the waiting troops fixed their minds on the west that clashing arms and a whirlwind of pursuit through the crooked northern street took them unawares.

The Chevalier du Lys came into sight, fighting and flying with a handful of men before a full retinue of English. La Hire saw with rage that there was a concerted ambush; for behind, on the Coucy road, galloped another company of English.

It was the evening-time when maids drove in their geese and peasants with laden panniers appeared from the fields. This untenanted village, this graveyard of the people, was filled with a brief resurrection; but it was the life of war—battle-cries, the scream of slaughtered horses, the encounter, ax to ax, sword to sword, club against club. Coucy had been taken by surprise, and the French were surrounded. At dusk victors and prisoners, all who were not left to increase the breath of pestilence among empty stone houses, moved up the ascent to Coucy Castle. An English warder raised the portcullis and let down the drawbridge.

So sudden and ruinous had been the result of this sortie that Pierre beheld the facts around him with slow receptiveness, a peasant's inability to compass the unusual returning upon him. He saw La Hire and De Xantrailles led to the dungeons—Jeanne's two friends —the only friends of all her thousands who had made any attempt to rescue her. And he heard De Xantrailles's mother weeping aloud among her women. And Coucy, the great seat of the Duke of Orléans, vaster and more beautiful than any other feudal hold

in the dismembered kingdom, full of such gathered art in marble and paintings as comforted men who had little to live for, a palace suited with everything known as luxury, a fortress proof against assault, had fallen into the hands of the English.

Pierre's captors began to strip off his armor in the court. There were many of them, talking English and Franco-Norman, and the hubbub calmed him. They seemed to have many prisoners, and to have swept much country in every direction around Coucy. Free companions were among these regular troops; he saw faces scowling at him that he traced slowly back to Lagny-sur-Marne, where Jeanne had dealt with English marauders.

He stood with the great round tower behind him, and was glad of the open night sky and cool August night air. The underground dungeons at Coucy were deep. Yet torches continued to spin about the court, and he was guarded, and not housed as the knights had been. A hand gentler than the hands that had stripped him touched his arm, and there stood Brother Pasquerel, fixing dark eyes of pity on him.

"We have added prisoners to the English instead of taking any from them, Brother Pasquerel," said the chevalier. His desperate laugh made the monk sadder. "What will become of my sister now?"

"Think now of thine own salvation, my son. The hour has come."

"What do they intend to do with me?"

Pierre felt the embarrassment of not being able to take the churchman seriously. He said to himself, "I am to die"; but that seemed to matter very little.

He knew nothing of death, though he faced it every day; but that it had arrived gave the moment a stinging novelty, and nothing more.

"The free companions in this troop are permitted to take revenge on you for the man who was turned over to justice at Lagny-sur-Marne," said the monk.

"Do you understand their words, Brother Pasquerel?"

"I understand their intentions. But they brought in an illustrious prisoner, who now waits in the chapel for ransom, and he knows their tongue and has told me what they say. The Archbishop of Rheims, journeying from Bourges to his own diocese, hath been molested by these lawless companions."

"The Archbishop of Rheims," said Pierre, "will find ransom an easy matter to arrange with his friends the English. If I were brother to Messire La Trémouille my head would be fast enough on my shoulders."

A firm-set head it looked, his undergarment being stripped to the waist, showing the round neck and young pink brawn of the torso.

"You confessed to me this morning, my son," said Brother Pasquerel, as Pierre's elbows were grasped by his executioners; and the young man had a solemn sense of prayers in his ears as he walked across the court. At the foot of a flight of stone steps leading from one of the towers was a stone block which the knights of Coucy had used in mounting their coursers. Beside it stood the free companion who was to act as headsman, his sleeves turned well back, and a ferocious readiness in his face. His mighty battle-ax would have beheaded a bull.

Pierre looked up at the filmy sky and all around him, feeling that he had neglected giving to the world all the attention it deserved. This was death—this coming withdrawal from things. He felt already far away, but neither afraid nor regretful. He thought of Jeanne, and of one other, and that reminded him of saying a prayer, which he whispered, his young features placid as marble, having its fine heroic grain. Brother Pasquerel had absolved many a dying man in the pucelle's first campaign, and in her last, to which he had followed her from Tours. But absolving the dying was an easy religious task compared with seeing the life struck brutally out of this young chevalier whom he loved. He had been from man to man, pleading against the slaughter with imploring gestures,—for the language of the victors he could not speak,—and they pushed him out of their way. The Archbishop of Rheims had taken sanctuary, with his frightened retinue, in the chapel, and Brother Pasquerel had despairingly asked his intercession, receiving an impatient reply from a prisoner who felt little interest in the pucelle or her relations.

"The pucelle hath been taken in her stubborn pride," said the archbishop. "She would not listen to counsel, and it is a just judgment that hath fallen upon her. As for this chevalier, I have no power to help him, being hindered on mine own journey, with all these poor people. If Poton de Xaintrailles had guarded his own, and left the pucelle and her family to their devices, he could have given me better welcome in Coucy."

Torches showed the intent and savage faces of their bearers gathered around the stone horse-block. Pierre

was forced to his knees. His arms were tied behind his back, and on his naked breast from armpit to nipple was ridged a clean red scar. The headsman spat upon both palms with a zest of anticipation, and Pierre heard the friar's shaking voice, like a distant humming of bees, as it went on with its office. He looked at the stone, and thought he would stretch his neck well across the hollow worn by feet. And then he felt his head seized by arms, and squeezed against the yielding bosom of a woman, and her draperies around his naked shoulders and over him. Thus shut in and stifled by heavenly odors like linden flowers, he could hear nothing but her heart and the rush of her breath.

His own pulses boomed. Oh, this was dying—to have all he desired in life encompassing him as his head was about to drop! Though Pierre knew his state was fixed, he laughed under Madeleine Power's cloak, exulting over the English, and La Trémouille, and the Archbishop of Rheims. It is better to die in the full flower of joy and effort than to linger even a little late.

The headsman rested his ax on the stone, for he saw there would be a controversy with this woman; and the Archbishop of Rheims, in wrath, pushed through the circle to reach his niece. If these favored prisoners had been shut in a tower before the execution began, much trouble would have been saved. Yet the new Captain of Coucy, and all his men, admired her, standing her ground in a whirlpool of three languages. For every man in the fortress had somewhere a woman in whose arms he secretly longed, yet scarcely hoped, to lay his head in his last hour. Ravaging and killing

was their trade; yet a woman might have her way with them, as it had been since the creation, and particularly since Mary the Virgin had been lifted like a lily over Christendom.

"This man is my betrothed husband," declared Madeleine in English. "I claim his life."

"Shame upon you!" spoke her uncle the archbishop at her ear.

"Let her prove it!" shouted some of the torch-bearers, accustomed in their own country to the encroachments of monastic brethren on the offices of priests. "Here is the friar—let him marry them."

"Hold your base tongues," said the new Captain of Coucy. "This demoiselle is niece to his lordship of Rheims, and to the little king's chancellor. She is not to be wedded for a show to men-at-arms."

"Off with his head, then! There be plenty of better men to comfort the demoiselle."

"He goes to the dungeon for ransom," decided the captain. "A brother of the pucelle, and nephew of the chancellor to the little King of Bourges, should bring good ransom."

"Franquet d'Arras was handed over by the pucelle to be beheaded at Lagny," was grumbled under the smoky glare of torches.

"Stand forth, you free riders who are not satisfied with the government of Coucy," cried the captain, wheeling in his place. "By St. George, there be cells enough under this rock for all of you! To the dungeon with this man, and with every free rider that hath aught to say further about Franquet d'Arras."

Pierre's arms were released. He stood up dazzled in

the torch-light, and took Madeleine openly into them; and the archbishop withdrew from the court, leaving her to her own devices. It had not been at his desire that this half-Scot was thrust on him for discipline. He sent her frightened waiting-woman after her—a middle-aged maid, who walked close to the black skirts of Brother Pasquerel.

Chinon was like a large inclosed garden; but Coucy was a perfect feudal castle, with central court and massive ancient round towers. The prisoner and Madeleine followed the jailer and his torch down a winding stone staircase. So close were the circular descending walls that Brother Pasquerel and the attendant and a warder following them found the dangerous stone footing scarcely wide enough for one; but they were not borne up by angels. Pierre and Madeleine walked side by side, and his naked guarding arm grazed the rock. He thought of Bertrand, free, outside of Coucy, and felt sorry for poor Bertrand.

They reached the first underground floor before they remembered that they were forgetting to talk, and this separation might last for years.

"Come on," urged the keeper, waiting below, and lifting his flambeau in the darkness. "We go down to the prisons beneath."

"Oh!" said Pierre and Madeleine, both drawing a breath of relief. There would be another flight of heavenly stairs, though the dungeon door waited like the grave at its foot. At this stage of their journey Madeleine put her arm around Pierre. She slipped into his hand and closed his fingers upon what had now become their love-token, the small purse of coin, the price of Jacques d'Arc's horse in Tours. France

was an impoverished country, yet hoarded money, an unspent treasure, thus passed from hand to hand. The germ of home went hid therein. Pierre forecast, with the happy certainty which brought good things to him, all the future to grow out of that seed. He saw the fair white-towered château he afterward built in Orléans, and the worship there given to this woman, his wife, and to his mother, the mother of the pucelle. For the first time he thought of Jehannette without a rush of anguish.

"At Bourges I could not see you," said Pierre, implying how much better it had befallen him at Coucy.

"At Bourges I began to think of you instead of my father," revealed Madeleine.

Then he remembered there was such a person as Louis de Coutes, and inquired, as if such a tie would be of trivial importance compared with this exaggerated moment:

"They did not celebrate your marriage after you left court?"

"No," answered Madeleine, also slighting the subject; and she added in simple explanation:

"I will never have any husband but you."

"I will never have any wife but you."

"Here is your cell, messire," spoke the jailer below.

Pierre and Madeleine clung together, and kissed each other with their first kiss at parting. The garments which had been stripped from Pierre were tossed into the dungeon by his keeper. Not a glint of daylight would ever penetrate to this depth under Coucy. Once more, and yet once more, they kissed each other, and he went smiling alone to the chain which his jailer clanked beside the wall.

XVI

THE lethargy which fell on France during the year Jeanne d'Arc lay in prison was like the sullenness of a beast that has been goaded to its last effort. The momentum she had given to war being withdrawn, the struggle ceased. Yet at that very time the tide turned at Orléans was running out toward Britain, carrying the invaders with it.

From Beaurevoir, along northern provinces to the sea, her journey of captivity had been watched with tears. When she descended the coast, and Rouen Castle inclosed her, the English held her by purchase from the Burgundians. And France slept on nearly a quarter of a century before rousing to demand what had been done, in the name of law, with its maid at the end of that year's imprisonment.

Other nations took knowledge that a pucelle—"of such high chivalry," says a chronicler, "that there was no knight in Christendom whose fame overshadowed hers"—was on trial among her enemies; that she was put in a cage in the tower of Rouen Castle, chained

with three chains, her feet manacled to a log of wood at night, and common soldiers occupied the room with a maid who had veiled the life of her body from man; that in Rouen, the real capital of English France, it was believed the English would never have any success in arms while she lived.

So low had war-ridden and dismembered France sunk that not only was French money paid by the English purchasers of the pucelle, but French men were found, in a corner of the realm, willing to condemn her for the English. Pierre Cauchon, the Count-Bishop of Beauvais, who had resented some horse-dealings of her household, and all of the power so young a creature had acquired over armies, made himself her judge, because she was taken in his diocese, and allowed her no counsel for defense. If the king had moved in her favor he might have had her tried at Rome, or Bâle, where a religious conference was then in progress. She was accused of intending to settle the claims of the three quarreling popes.

Only one lawyer of Paris had the courage to declare her trial illegal from beginning to end, and he was obliged to leave Rouen in haste, and betake himself to a place where he would be safer.

The Inquisition and the University of Paris were ordered to appear in the case against her; but not even a priest was permitted to speak for her.

When Jeanne was at Beaurevoir, there was a tale told that she fell from the high tower, and was taken up for dead, in her frenzied attempt to escape and go back to the help of Compiègne. But it is not recorded that Orléans or Compiègne, or any other town, of-

fered anything but processions and prayers for her release.

The Archbishop of Rheims issued from his part of the realm a comforting letter to his flock, assuring them that the maid had been abandoned as an instrument of heaven, but they might count on the shepherd boy from the mountains.

In Bourges and Sully the winter was merry with cards and lute-playing. There the maid, when any one thought of her, was blamed for leaving court and throwing herself into danger. Perhaps Queen Yolande, and of a certainty Agnes Sorel, moved for her ransom. But meanness bred of long poverty held back, and the English neither held back nor hesitated to tax France for the money.

La Hire and De Xantrailles and her brother were in prison. But where were the young Duc d'Alençon, the Bastard of Orléans, and all those fair captains who had followed her banner to victory?

Seventy accusations, finally reduced to twelve Latin articles, were brought against the prisoner, chief of which were wearing man's clothes, leading troops to battle, pretending to have heavenly voices, blasphemy, and witchcraft. Only six public sessions were held, but the trial with closed doors dragged daily from February until nearly the end of May. An emaciated, fetter-worn maid, not yet nineteen years old, tormented by endless cunning questions, was driven to recite such matters as her secret prayer before the court: "Very tender God, in honor of your holy passion, I pray you, if you love me, that you will reveal to me how I ought to answer these churchmen. I know well,

as to this habit, the commandment why I took it, but I do not know in what manner I ought to leave it off. Be pleased, therefore, to teach me."

Or she was taunted about those voices of whom she had spoken only when necessary in her life. Or she was lured to confess sorcery in her victories, and answered indignantly: "En nom Dé, I did nothing but tell the men to go in boldly, and I went in myself; and I think it would be a good thing for France if I did now as I did before. Why do not the English quit France, and begone into their own country?"

In Domremy the people waited some dreadful event. But Choux enjoyed the May sunshine in front of the Widow Davide's wine-shop. He resorted there because he had long been forbidden to come nearer her door than the boundary of the manure-heap. When Choux encroached beyond that stone line, the Widow Davide made a sally with water, which usually struck him in the face, and gave him his only experience of it. With his woolen cap-strings dripping, he slapped his breast, and danced before his enemy.

"Does the Widow Davide think she can drown me? It is not permitted. Come out and drag me again to the Meuse, Widow Davide!"

"Have a care, or it shall yet be done, thou foul sorcerer," threatened the Widow Davide. "Thou art spared for Jehannette d'Arc's sake, because she hath taken the tax off Domremy and Greux."

"Things go better with me than with Jehannette d'Arc. Regard me! I have had a voice above two years, and I am not put in prison. I am indeed the flower of the Meuse valley."

"Shut the door against him, Haumette," said the Widow Davide to her daughter. "He will vaunt himself until poor Jacques d'Arc overhears his words. The D'Arcs may be ennobled, and Jehannette may have been a great general riding with the king; but Jacques d'Arc sits a broken-hearted man, and she is a prisoner. I see not that the D'Arcs are better off than I am. And I bore much scandal from thy roving summer, and the child that Aveline Laxart found by miracle in the church of Bury-la-Côte and killed by over-nursing. Since she hath found one of her own this year without miracle, and can rest her tongue concerning St. Catherine and that other, it may die out of memory. But I see not that the D'Arcs, with two children laid in English prisons, are better off than I am."

Haumette herself, gazing with chastened black eyes along Domremy street, and across the interval to Greux, knew as her mother did not that hush of suspense, that martyr-worship of the maid's family, which hung over the villages. The greatness that had flashed upon her, and struck her for her sin, and repented the blow in one agonized look of memory and tenderness, was stamped on Haumette forever. She was not sorry about the child in Bury-la-Côte, there being no maternity in her. But she repented with many prayers every day on her knees that she had been unfit for the touch of Jeanne d'Arc's sword.

In the May weather Mengette had the sense of some divine, terrible presence on the hills, as she led her geese out early. She looked down at the church, thinking fearfully of St. Michael. If Isabel had not

needed her so much during the year her lonely life would have been unendurable. But Jacquemine d'Arc was now home from Vaucouleurs, and she was careful to keep out of his way. He looked at her in church, and he walked past her house when his work was done. He also sent his mother to reason with Mengette, and to prove that troth had never been broken between them by their quarrel. Mengette listened to Isabel without a word, and avoided Jacquemine.

He had not fared very well in Vaucouleurs. Gerardin d'Épinal said the people of Vaucouleurs refused him at sight as the brother of the pucelle; but when he adopted the name of Du Lys, they rose up, and cast their official over the city wall. He was needed at Domremy before he came riding dejectedly home; for Jacques d'Arc no longer went afield, or even tended the sheep, but sat always with Jeanne's letter, written before she went into France, spread open on the table.

Jacquemine had been home since midwinter. Usually when Mengette saw him approaching, and increased the space between them, he turned off, or retraced the way he had come. But while she was watching her geese nip the short May grass which broke through the white hill soil, he drew quite close to her, stealthily. Mengette left the gander quavering at this intrusion, and walked toward the oak woods, pulling wool on her distaff as if she thought only of spinning. Jacquemine followed her. She turned on the upland, having him at her heels; and her geese waddled in a long line to meet her.

"Mengette," said Jacquemine, "I intend to come to

speech with you this day, wherever you may set your face."

She continued her walk.

"Gerardin d'Épinal says you do well to be rid of me, for I am a poor stunted creature, and you will make a better marriage."

Mengette turned upon him. "That is not the truth."

She saw at arm's-length how wasted he was, and that the dear lines of his face, which had been hers since his boyhood, were stamped deep by care.

"I wish I had not gone to the vineyard the day we quarreled. I wish I had never gone to Vaucouleurs. Domremy is good enough for me. My father is plainly dying on account of Jehannette, and Pierre also is in prison. My brother Jean is settled at Vauthon. Whether my name be D'Arc or Du Lys, whether I be noble or simple, I have these old people to feed; and you have Choux. I must take my father's place, and tend the fields and vineyards."

All the little jealousies of Jacquemine's life were swallowed up in fraternal love and anguish, and a sob almost rent his slight body.

"Oh, Jehannette! Oh, Pierrelo!"

Mengette dropped her distaff, and wept upon her own hands.

"But Choux," said Jacquemine, still sobbing, "will live forever. My mother counsels that we marry at once, without waiting for him to die. We can take care of him together. If your mind be not fixed on making a better marriage, in God's name put me off no longer."

"My mind was never turned to marriage with any other man, Jacquemine d'Arc."

He picked up her distaff, and she took it, drawing out a thread, and brightening over the accustomed labor. Long talk and much spinning, following the geese through the grass, seeing their own peaceful world lying at their feet—these were the homely, sweet comforts which would never come to a man on another hillside at the opposite corner of France.

Moist lush hills, holding Rouen in their lap, sloped skyward, though where the soil cropped out it was white like the soil of the Meuse valley. The Seine, full of wooded islands, flowed at their feet. A little later, cowslips and poppies would be showing through the green—thousands of lustrous-petaled cups massed in smears of yellow and crimson.

The ocean tide came up to Rouen. Bertrand de Poulengy watched the morning glint upon the river at intervals; but his mind was fixed within the walls, where the life of the city was spread below him, diminished only by distance. His horse grazed behind him on the heights which rolled toward Bonsecours chapel. He wore no plate-armor, and his lean body shrunk from his hose and leather cuirass and short tunic of chain mail. On his knees he had spread out a piece of the linen banner Jeanne d'Arc carried through all her battles. An archer had cut it up at Compiègne, and Bertrand's own captor the more willingly divided his fragment with his prisoner because he half feared the magic of the thing.

Bertrand traced over and over the city walls around which he had skirted helplessly. The gray pinnacled

mass of Rouen Castle was grim even in May-time. Bedford was lord of that castle, though Warwick was Captain of Rouen. Broad light upon hills and long Seine valley showed one of the fairest parts of Normandy. For here the peasant was guarded at his labor, Louviers, still held by La Hire's garrison, being the only unconquered town near by.

He noticed a bell tolling in Rouen, and the blackness made by congregated people, even when their raiment or armor is bright, showed in one quarter of the city near him. It was not very far from the castle's grayness that they were swarming together, and after a while a yellow glare struggled up in the midst of them. Wavering and lofty rose a pillar of smoke.

Bertrand de Poulengy stood up with his arms stretched behind him, the wrists back to back. He knew Jeanne d'Arc had not been condemned to perish at the stake. All the world knew she was a prisoner in Rouen Castle yet undergoing trial. But who was chained to the iron stake in the market-place below him?

Bertrand began to feel the faintness of excessive heat, and to breathe the quivering air which whirled its white anguish around him. He felt his clothing scorch, and the shame of its cracking upon him, and leaving him naked to cruel eyes.

"Water!" he whispered—"holy water!"

And then the flames rose around him, and he was alone in this red, stifling death, sinking in coals and hot plaster as fagots crumbled, breathing flame, his flesh running in liquid agony, his bones warping.

"Jesus!" he gasped—"Jesus!"

And then he felt himself drawn slowly upward; he heard music, he smelled a thousand sweet odors, as numbness passed to gladness, the music became half-distinct words, and he laughed in exultation:

"The voices!"

Light as air, he shot aloft from the earth, and turned his head to see, shooting up with the same impulse from the smoke in Rouen, a dove. He forgot his own flight, and hung watching it. Without flutter of wings or swerve of body, it rose and rose, and was gone in the dazzle. Sinking, he watched in a kind of trance for that dove to reappear, remembering skylarks on the Vosges hills, and forgetting that he had ever suffered.

Mists gathered from the void, and set a lower sky betwixt the dove and him. The emotions which come like winds from we know not what hollows of space to play upon us—poor, helpless stringed instruments of flesh and spirit—played on him, and made eternity around him. Bertrand lay on the hill overlooking Rouen until late afternoon.

The rain with sudden little whip-lashes cut him, and water ran in minute tricklings around him; the sun broke out; and the smoke, curved and driven into fantastic shapes by the wet air, again rose straight from Rouen, thinning to airy blueness. He was in peace, as in some divine ether. Sometimes the breathing and low grinding of his courser, the companion of many a long journey on the earth, intruded near by. But the horse was not insistent, like a man who stood over him, heavy shod in the herbage, shaking him, and saying:

"Bertrand! Bertrand de Poulengy!"

He looked at the man with slow interest.

"Is it thou, Bertrand? There is little left of thy face except the bones and blue eyes."

"D'Aulon, have you died also?"

"What ails thee, lad? Has prison made a ghost of me?"

"I think I dreamed." The young squire sat up, and the old squire sat on the ground beside him.

The air was sweet after rain, and all scent of smoke was gone. With the instinct of adjusting himself to what was present, Bertrand came forward in his eyes, and examined his old companion.

"Where have you been, D'Aulon?"

"In Rouen prison this twelvemonth past."

"Then you saw her. How does she fare?"

"Well, I trust in God," answered the old squire.

"But who brought you out of Rouen prison?"

"The pucelle's ransom money that she sent from Bourges a year ago."

"Yes; she sold all her nags. She ransomed you, but no one ransoms her. D'Aulon, did they burn a prisoner in Rouen to-day?"

"I heard so."

"Was it a man or a woman?"

"It was a woman, lad."

Bertrand looked down, and twisted his fingers in the grass.

"Doubtless it was some poor old woman."

The other squire leaned forward, sheltering his face with both hands. "No; she was young."

"We are used to war, you and I, D'Aulon. Never mind the woman they burned, but tell me about

the pucelle. Does she think we have all forgotten her?"

"Would a poor squire be allowed any speech with the pucelle, lad?"

"No—no. I never have learned, in all my service, how far beneath her I am."

"Where have you been, Bertrand, this twelvemonth past?"

"All over the northern provinces, trying to collect robbers to attack Rouen, since there are no longer any soldiers in France. You say they burned a woman to-day. But she was not the age of the pucelle?"

"About the age of the pucelle," answered the old squire; and he broke into groans and tears, bending forward upon his knees, and weeping aloud.

Bertrand made no noise but an audible swallowing, as if struggling for breath in the midst of smoke. He waited a long time for the other to be done wailing.

"They burned a young maid alive—a young maid about the age of the pucelle," he resumed. "Did you see it done, D'Aulon?"

"No, I did not see it. I could not see a thing like that done; but the streets were full of weeping women, and weeping men, too, as I came out of the prison. Her name was on every side."

"Do not speak her name," said Bertrand, sharply. "Did this young maid suffer long?"

"I think not very long, though the pile was purposely built so high that the executioner could not reach her to shorten her suffering. She had a cross brought from the nearest church and held up where she could see it; and she called out for holy water."

D'Aulon still hid his face in his hands.

"The priest stayed with her until he was in danger of burning also. Then she made him come down off the pile. It was afterward that she called for water. And the people say she also cried aloud the name of Jesus. No; it was not very long that the blessed maid was forced to suffer; for her head soon fell upon her breast. The flames took wonderful shapes as of wings, and there were men near who heard her speak of something else."

"What was it?"

D'Aulon looked aside at the young squire, and whispered: "She spoke of voices. And a soldier fell in a fit: he saw a dove rise from the fire."

Both squires sat like stone, the younger one with an unwinking gaze fixed on Rouen. When the sun was gone he said, without turning his head:

"D'Aulon, I took your name while you were in prison. Whatever I did as her squire was done in your name."

"Why did you take my name?"

"God knows. It was my whim. She praised you once. I give it back to you with my horse. Take my horse, and ride to Louviers. You will find friends in Louviers."

"By St. Martin, I will not take the courser from under you, and leave you here alone in sight of this cursed city."

"D'Aulon, I never loved you. Would I give you my horse if I needed it? Respect a man's vows, and begone. When I come to Louviers you may give me my horse again."

"But you are too weak to walk."

"I have had the pestilence, but I have strength to walk as far as I am to go."

"Let me put you on the courser, and fare beside you."

"Take him, or another may seize his bridle with less right."

The shadows would overtake D'Aulon on his perilous ride. When he was gone, the young squire made haste down to the Seine, and waited there until a great Norman horse came out of the city gates, drawing a cart. A haggard man walked beside the cart, and he turned, and carefully backed his horse near the water. Iridescent brine and the reflected rosiness of sunset made pools of fire-opal in the Seine. The tide was up. When it ran out it would carry drenched refuse of a funeral pile—plaster in which the stake had been fixed, ashes, charred bone, and one great, darkly crimson clot like a ruby.

"Her heart, it was so full of blood it would not burn," muttered the man beside the cart; and looking across his load, he saw a pinched, blue-eyed face at the other wheel. The Norman peasant took off his cap to his superior.

"Are you the executioner of Rouen?"

"Yes, messire."

"Did you burn a woman there to-day?"

"Yes, messire."

"For what was she condemned?"

"Sorcery, messire, though there be many say she died a martyr, and ten thousand people wept."

"When was she condemned?"

"Early this morning, messire. God forgive her judges."

Bertrand clung with both lean hands to the spokes of the wheel. "What was her name?"

"Jeanne d'Arc, messire—that great captain of the French called the pucelle."

Jeanne d'Arc!—a splash in the Seine, a dissolving of ashes, a spread of sinking fragments! No! there was a mightier presence in that sunset land. It was the time of evening when she rode in to her victories.

Behind the carter's back, and so quietly that his sinking made no sound, Bertrand let himself down into the water, to float with her to the sea. He heard the rush of troops, the clang of armor, the crash of falling walls, and a woman's voice,—a leader's voice, an angel's voice,—bell-like, spreading its tones wave upon wave, until they seemed to reach the horizon, to ripple over France and around the world:

"Amys! Amys! ayez bon courage! Sus! Sus! Ils sont tous nostres!"

THE DAYS OF JEANNE D'ARC

MARY HARTWELL CATHERWOOD